



E 2122



## **BREAKDOWN**





# **B R E A K D O W N**

**THE COLLAPSE OF TRADITIONAL  
CIVILISATION**

by

**ROBERT BRIFFAULT**

**LONDON  
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD**

**1935**

*Printed in Great Britain by*  
**The Camelot Press Ltd., London and Southampton**

# CONTENTS

<i>Chapter I.</i>	The Myth of Civilisation	<i>page</i> 7
II.	Modern Mediævalism	24
III.	Tradition	41
IV.	The Cycles of Civilisation	55
V.	Mental Decay	70
VI.	Moral Indignation	90
VII.	Is the Doom Sealed ?	103
VIII.	Why is Traditional Civilisation Unpopular ?	121
IX.	The Chaos of Thought	141
X.	Artificial Stupefaction	153
XI.	Democracy	165
XII.	Liberalism	181
XIII.	The Russian Experiment	201
XIV.	The New Humanity	216
XV.	Manners, Culture, and Civilisa- tion	235
XVI.	Individualism	247
XVII.	Optimism and Pessimism	267
XVIII.	Between Two Worlds	278



## CHAPTER I

# THE MYTH OF CIVILISATION

OUR LIVES are cast in a world of human devices which imposes upon us conditions more inflexible than the laws of physical nature and which we, as individuals, are even more powerless to control or modify. That world is man-made, it is the outcome of human purposes, the expression of human desires and endeavours. Yet for the vast majority its workings are wrapped in mystery. The structure of the milky way and of the atom is in many respects better understood than is the nature and structure of what is termed human society. In proof of this one need only point to the perplexity manifested when, as now happens, some mischance mars the smooth operation of the social mechanism. It would be easy to cite a hundred pronouncements, each from an authoritative and accredited source, and each differing from all others in its estimate of the nature and causes of the phenomenon. No agreement is even to be found 'as to whether it is essentially

economic, political, psychological, or spiritual. A similar confusion marks the multitude of conflicting opinions daily set forth concerning every aspect of the social structure.

Yet that structure is as much the product of human agencies as is any mechanism fashioned by the hand of man, and should be as intelligible as that of an automobile to the engineer who built it. No exploration by means of scientific apparatus is required to discover its design, no elaborate enquiry or research even is needful. The facts are patent to inspection, the records are accounted common knowledge. If to the great majority they remain mysteriously inapprehensible it is because over them has been drawn the veil of a consecrated and agelong myth. That myth is assumed in every judgment and estimate. It is incorporated in the very terms of ordinary language, so that to avoid its assumptions is sometimes difficult without employing circumlocutions.

The structure of the man-made world is spoken of as human society. A society means a fellowship, a voluntary association of individuals inspired by a common purpose, working for a common object, in view of benefits common

to all, in which every member is equally interested in the success of the common endeavour. The implication of the expression "human society" is that it is an organisation of mankind, devised by the common efforts of the race, for the common good. Those purposes and desires of which it is the outcome are understood to be those of the human race, of mankind in general. Society or civilisation is frequently said to be the work of "man." Thoughtful writers who bestow the benefit of their mature wisdom on intelligent readers habitually employ such phrases as—"Man has not yet succeeded in controlling the social structure which he has built," or "The form of social organisation which modern humanity has adopted." A recent book bore the title : *Man's Own Show : Civilisation*. The deviser of what is termed social organisation, or civilisation, is in such expressions assumed to be "man" in general, "mankind." Mankind has, one is given to understand, at some time or other adopted from choice that social organisation and fashioned it for its own purposes. The philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were fond of enlarging



on the thesis. Social organisation, they represented, was the result of an agreement or contract by which people had consented to waive certain personal liberties in exchange for the advantages accruing from membership in a social organisation. The task of devising it had been entrusted to rulers and ruling classes on whom power was bestowed for the purpose of providing for the general good of mankind.

Those views are mythical. A social organisation of mankind has at no time in past history been attempted or contemplated. What has been termed the social organisation of the human world is not the work of "man" or of "mankind" in general. It is not the outcome of the will or desire of the race or of any territorial section of it. The terms "man" and "mankind" are employed in the current phrases of liberal historians in the same manner as the names "France," "England," or "the United States" in discussions of political or financial transactions. It is currently understood that when the interests of England in China, or the desires of the United States in regard to Guatemala are alluded to, no reference is intended to the desires or interests of

the bulk of the people of England or of the United States, but to the desires and interests of the governments of those countries, and in particular of numerically small groups financially interested in the matters at issue. The metaphor misleads no one. Not so, however, with the figurative language of our philosophers when they descant upon the enterprises of "man" or of "mankind" in social construction, employing the terms in exactly the same manner as the names of governments are used by political writers. The convention employed by the latter is easily interpreted, that of social historians is not. For while the interests and desires of financial or industrial groups may quite well be promoted by governments, it is not possible for the interests and desires of mankind in general to have taken effect in a social organisation established in the manner in which civilised society, as it is termed, has been established. Far from that organisation being, directly or indirectly, the expression of the purposes or desires of mankind in general, or the outcome of their efforts and endeavours, it has, on the contrary, been forcibly imposed upon mankind. Armed bands, priests,

appropriators of land and of other sources of subsistence and wealth have for their own purposes given rise to that organisation by subjecting the bulk of mankind to their domination. The purpose of that organisation has not been to give effect to the desires of mankind and to promote its interests, but to give effect to the desires of ruling groups or classes and to promote their interests.

No two purposes could differ more widely. The good of mankind is an ideal which generally commends itself. To hold that human beings are solely ruled by selfishness and greed would be cynically unfair and untrue. Individuals constantly sacrifice their interests to ideals. But the motives which influence individual behaviour cannot in the same manner determine the collective behaviour of corporate groups, especially when those groups are consolidated as established institutions. A banker may well be a philanthropist and an idealist ; a bank cannot. A statesman may be inspired by the highest ideals ; for a sovereign state to surrender one tittle of its concrete interests as a sovereign state is not possible. Collective behaviour is of necessity reduced to the lowest

common denominator of direct motives. It is strictly and inflexibly determined by interests, and by these alone. Therein lies the difference between individual and social psychology. Behaviour, in the former case, is not predictable ; in the latter it is, because it is confined to one order of motives. When dealing with the behaviour of an institutionalised aggregate, group, or class, we are not dealing with a psychological individual, but with a mechanism. The driving force and directing springs of that mechanism are indeed human, but they do not possess the range and flexibility of human motives. The individual may be a moral individual the mechanism is entirely amoral and concretely materialistic. It behaves as an abstract entity, independently of the psychological complexity of the individuals which constitute it. These are reduced to cogs in the mechanical process, which is actuated solely by the concrete and immediate interests which it represents.

And the interests of a ruling class possessing privileged and profitable power are not only different from those of mankind in general ; they are opposite. Power that is profitable and

not merely influential would be an illusion and an unreality were it not exercised at the expense of those over which it is wielded. The implementation of it implies a corresponding diminution in the quarter in which it is exercised. The interests arising out of that structural situation can never be identical with those of "mankind." Any form of organisation intended to promote the former bears no resemblance to one calculated to promote the latter.

When, therefore, what is termed the organisation of human society is said to be the work of "man," when its purpose is assumed to be the good of mankind, when it is represented as the outcome of a line of endeavour directed toward that object, the suggestions are wholly imaginary and the implications mythical. The myth is as ancient as the organisation. It is indeed an indispensable part of the process by which that organisation has been established and maintained. Unless loyalty toward it can be promoted and safeguarded by drawing a decent veil of conventional misrepresentation over what might else appear indelicate, to maintain that structure would not be possible. No fiction has accordingly become more

rofoundly embedded in the established tradition of civilised society than the myth of its nature and purpose, none has been more consistently respected. It is assumed and implied with unsuspecting candour in every judgment and cogitation of the liberal social philosopher. Any estimate founded upon the basis of that myth is of necessity vitiated and stultified.

That social organisation did not arise as a deliberate endeavour to provide for the good of mankind would probably be granted by most social thinkers. The imaginary theories of eighteenth-century doctrinaires have long been discarded. But it is suggested that the social organisation which has never been undertaken and the consent of mankind which has never been signified have nevertheless become effective through a process of successive adjustments and compromises. History is pictured in the current teaching of schools and universities as a continuous process directed toward improving social conditions, an endeavour leading up to, and culminating in the existing social order of civilised states. Though the process may have been initiated in ancient and barbaric times by mere lust for the profit to be derived from

power and domination, that abuse has become curtailed by successive liberal reforms and revolutions, and out of the barbarism of old oppressions modern democracy has arisen. The ideals of freedom and public good have become substituted for the tyrannies of less enlightened ages and are embodied in the constitutions of modern nations. Ruling power is no longer the privilege of a group or class, it is bestowed upon every member of democratic societies by the vote. The result is the carefully considered product of available knowledge and intelligence guided by immutable principles of rectitude and equity and labouring single-eyed to compass the general good of the human race. Though some aspects of existing organisation and some of the methods employed in maintaining it may give occasion for legitimate criticism, such free discussion is encouraged with a view to making available all suggestions for the improvement of social organisation. Those upon whom fall the burden and responsibility of conducting human affairs, inspired by zeal for the general welfare, are, it is implied, eager to consider such suggestions as may supplement the recommendations of their

expert financial advisers. Whatever may have been its origins, the existing social organisation thus gives effect to the general desire and endeavour of mankind and is governed by its interests. It represents the ideal good of the human race so far as that may be secured by the efforts of available intelligence. It is the outcome of the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind.

Setting aside any tinge of irony which may be shed on that complacent conception by the contrast presented with familiar realities, it is in substance and principle no less fictitious than any other form of the traditional myth. Indeed the assumptions which it contains, the formulas and slogans of liberal democracy, are considerably bolder in their unveracity than any myth which may have served in antique theocracies to foster loyalty towards the paternal tyranny of Oriental autocrats. There have been liberal political revolutions as there have always been conflicts between various claimants to dominant power, but changes in the holders and the means of power do not constitute changes in social organisation. Inevitably political power has become successively



transferred to whatever classes of society have happened to hold the reality of controlling power. It has been transferred from priests to warriors, from autocrats to landowners. In industrialised societies it has naturally become transferred to owners of more productive wealth. But the fiction which equates the latter with "mankind" or "the people" does not differ in any respect from that which represented priestly or warlike autocrats as equivalent to the human race. Power has never consisted of political votes. On the contrary, political votes have always been controlled by those holding more substantial power. The latter are bound to accept the accident of an adverse vote only as long as they choose. If they do not choose they use their power.

Liberal democratic reforms have not changed the purpose of social organisation. That purpose is not the good of mankind. If in any transaction with that organisation, as in endeavouring to obtain food, clothing, or shelter, I should appeal to that principle, the grocer, the tailor, and the landlord would probably signify their profound enthusiasm for it, but they would point out to me that unfortunately

the organisation of society being at present what it is, they are not philanthropic institutions. When a certain contract for the improvement of the Great Central Railway was being discussed by the board of directors at New York, it was pointed out by the president that the proposal could not be seriously considered as no one would benefit by it except the public. In their larger and more general aspects human affairs are no less completely dissociated from the purpose ascribed to the organisation by liberal idealists. Those affairs are conducted by the governments of sovereign nations. The purpose of those governments, far from being the good of mankind, is on the contrary to inflict as much injury upon the bulk of mankind as is humanly possible. Those efforts are never relaxed, and are only slightly intensified when they take the form of wholesale homicide and devastation. That particular aspect of the social organisation which is the result of the accumulated wisdom of mankind has of late given rise to expressions of dissatisfaction. The reason why the discovery has only of late been made that wars are unsatisfactory is not that a sudden concern for the good of mankind has

developed, but that wars have become extremely expensive and apparently unprofitable. That particular aspect of social organisation which is arousing wide criticism does not, however, differ in principle or effect from other aspects which arouse wide enthusiasm. The good of mankind is not more the purpose of the organisation of individual relations than it is that of the organisation of international relations. That purpose is specially stigmatised by the term "idealism." Idealism has no place in the relations between sovereign nations, except as regards the wording of public documents and addresses. It lies outside the sphere of practical politics. Those relations are governed, and can be governed, only by the interests of sovereign states acting under the advice of financial experts. Similarly in the relations between individuals idealism has no place except where concrete interests are not involved. The transactions of organised society are conducted on business lines. And business is business. It has nothing to do with the good of mankind. It is in fact the exact opposite of any form of idealism.

In excuse of those less inspiring features of

the social organisation of mankind, it is usual to suggest that they are the outcome of certain deplorable characteristics of human nature and that the only means to amend them is to preach sermons. That explanation, to which reference will again have to be made—for it is habitually offered in every instance—is erroneous. The unidealistic spirit which governs the transaction of public and private business is, undoubtedly, like the disposition to murder, present in human nature. But it is manifested by human nature operating under the particular conditions of the existing organisation, and it is as a result of the nature of that organisation and not as a result of human nature that it governs the transactions conducted under those conditions. It cannot, incidentally, be remedied by preaching sermons, but only by modifying an organisation which inculcates and necessitates the intensified operation of that deplorable element of human nature.

The plea that an organisation originally established for the purpose of promoting the interests of holders of power has, as a result of liberal reforms, become transformed into an organisation having for its purpose the

promotion of the interests of mankind at large is fictitious and grossly absurd. Such a transformation is, in the first place, not possible. An organisation designed to carry out the former purpose cannot give rise to one calculated to bring about the latter. Nor can it in any way and by any means be modified or adapted so as to perform a function wholly different from that which it was designed to perform except by abolishing it. The suggested process is based upon a similar view of mechanics as the performance of the notorious Baron Munchausen when he raised himself aloft by the hair of his head ; or the naïve expectation that war, having become doubtfully profitable, can be abolished by the action of sovereign states which are institutions for defending their interests by every means, licit or illicit. A sovereign state which should surrender one hair's breadth of that power and claim would in the act of so doing have ceased to be a sovereign state. To expect war to be abolished by instruments of war, to expect Baron Munchausen to levitate by pulling at his hair, to expect an alleged social organisation established in the interest and for the profit of holders of power

to provide for the good of mankind is akin to nonsense. The organisation has never been abolished. It has, on the contrary, been studiously and zealously conserved. The entire tradition of civilised humanity has been and is strenuously maintained and cultivated with a view to retaining that original structure unchanged. The myth that it is a social organisation devised for the good of mankind is part of that tradition. But for the preservation and inculcation of that age-long myth the patent fiction that the organisation has been changed in character by universal suffrage could not fool multitudes.

## CHAPTER II

### MODERN MEDIÆVALISM

**T**HE PRESENT PHASE of civilisation, commonly known as Western, is the second which has arisen in Europe. The first was the Greco-Roman world which fell into dissolution some fifteen centuries ago, and is sometimes referred to as "antiquity."

For reasons readily intelligible the present age is particularly conscious of its "modernity." The term has acquired a new value and significance, for the decades which living men and women have known in their youth have receded into a past which appears almost archæological. Yet whatever is modern in the present world, its essential social framework and the tradition which it represents certainly are not. They have been entirely determined by a remote past, and the dead hand which it lays upon them is far from representing accumulated wisdom and experience. Rather is it the hand of barbarism and savagery. So long as that incubus weighs upon it, the claim of the present age to modernity

is very restricted. There can be little doubt that in the larger perspective of future generations the times we live in will appear to be hardly distinguishable from those which we term the Middle Ages. Of the elements which go to make up modern civilisation a far larger proportion indeed belongs to the Middle Ages, with which it is continuous, than to what is modern in the experience and outlook of humanity.

Certainly a greater contrast than is presented between the external appearance of the modern world and that of the sixth century, between the luxuries of a modern city like Paris or New York, roaring with the hubbub of automobiles and aeroplanes, and the cluster of hovels around the castle of a barbaric chieftain would be difficult to picture. But we are far too prone to identify civilisation and progress with such material achievements. No estimate which dissociates those external aspects from the social structure which they overlay can claim essential insight. At a time when the first European civilisation was fast heading for dissolution, the Romans were wont to look with complacent pride on a material culture



and luxury undreamed of until then. They pointed to the fleets that plied on a regular schedule from the ends of the known world to feed the Eternal City and bring to it exotic luxury and wealth, to the network of highways and the organised services which seemed to them to have brought the remotest corners of the empire to their door. They contrasted that wealth, those achievements, that power, that luxury with the rude conditions under which their fathers had lived, and they would have smiled at the fantastic suggestion that such power, such wealth, such triumphs of civilisation could be other than imperishable. Yet even while they gloried in its material triumphs the structure was tottering to ruin. In its external and material aspect it was far richer on the eve of its downfall than at the height of its vitality. No marked material decay heralded the end, no appreciable lowering in the standards of luxury. Those were not the things that counted, or if they counted, it was in a manner very different from that which they seemed to betoken as the signs of prosperity and success.

What is to-day particularly connoted by the

term "modernity" is rather a mental quality and attitude than a material change. But the structure of the human world which the externals of material progress overlay is not the expression of the modern mind, of modern knowledge or intelligence. It is the direct product of the Middle Ages.

To take one or two instances. Why is it that Western civilisation is divided up into states, or nations, which are conducted as if they were entirely independent of one another, which often exterminate one another in wars, and when not actually engaged in killing and devastating are employed in outwitting and injuring one another as much as they can? That feature of the system of Western civilisation was set up in the barbarous ages when the first European civilisation broke down. At the time it was not divided into independent nations. The whole of European civilisation, which was, it is true, much smaller in extent than modern Western civilisation, formed a single state or nation, known as the Roman Empire. Wars were only conducted against the barbarians or savages outside European civilisation in order to protect it. The barbarians, like other

savage people, had no states or nations, but only small bands or tribes with petty chiefs to lead them in war. When the Roman Empire fell, the Roman priests suggested to some of the barbarian chiefs that if they would help to impose the religion of the Roman priests upon as many people as possible, they (the priests) would help the barbarian chiefs to become powerful rulers, like Oriental kings, and to govern not petty gangs of bandits, but large kingdoms which might be carved out of the Roman Empire. For example, one tribal chief who was the captain of a little band of five thousand stalwarts became, at the suggestion and with the help of the Roman priests, who arranged such practical details as the assassination of his competitors, the ruler of one of the most important portions of the old Roman Empire. His descendants continued to enjoy the same position until the year 1792, and were known as France, a name which, by a common confusion, came to be given to the state or nation over which they ruled. In exactly the same manner kingdoms and states were established by Roman priests and barbarian chiefs in Italy, in Spain, in England, in Poland,

in Scandinavia and in every other part of Europe. The Roman priests who, with the help of barbarian chiefs, gave rise to those arrangements and who afterwards acted as ministers or advisers of the barbarian kings, also saw to it that the various kingdoms should be kept sharply divided, for in that manner alone could the influence of the priests be maintained. That policy of the Roman priesthood was known as keeping "the balance of power." The system of independent nations which characterises Western civilisation is thus the result of circumstances which happened to obtain after the first European civilisation fell and when Europe was extremely barbarous.

As another instance of the manner in which Western civilisation has grown up, we may consider a feature of it which is now attracting a great deal of attention, namely the division of its members into classes of rich people who own the land, food, materials, etc., and workers who labour to produce money for them. It is a common mistake to suppose that the arrangement has been invented in recent times by wicked people called capitalists. It is true that the modern methods by which

rich people obtain their wealth by getting others to work for them are of recent date and are the result of modern conditions. But the arrangement itself is not modern. It is extremely ancient. In the first European civilisation the work was done by slaves. The ruling classes owned the land. They bought slaves, fed and clothed them and made them work. After the fall of the Roman Empire the system of buying captured slaves at slave-markets changed into that of buying or acquiring them together with the land on which they lived. They were no longer called slaves, but serfs, or subjects. Feudal lords had, however, exactly the same rights over their serfs as Roman landlords over their slaves. When new sources of wealth far more productive than landowning were discovered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enormous numbers of slaves were required. They were not bought in slave-markets or as part of the land, but sold themselves directly to the owners for wages. Since the owners held not only land, but all other things as well, they were in a position to buy slaves as cheaply as possible, for the slaves, having no other means

of living except by hiring themselves out, had no choice but to do so very cheaply or to starve. The arrangement, which has caused a good deal of dissatisfaction of late years, is not, then, a wicked device of modern capitalists, but an arrangement which dates from antiquity when workers, instead of being called free citizens of civilised states, were spoken of as slaves.

Let us consider one more feature of Western civilisation. A great deal is heard in it about religion and a great deal of influence is exercised by institutions which are called Christian churches. Here again the impression prevails that the religion of the Christian churches exercises that influence because it is the best and wisest system of ideas which can be thought of at the present time. But in point of fact the religion of Western civilisation has not been selected because it is the best and wisest that could be devised but, like the system of independent nations at war with one another and the system of slavery, because it happened to obtain at the time when the first European civilisation became disintegrated amid chaos and barbarism. It is beyond doubt to any

unprejudiced person that had this not happened to be the case, and the Christian religion were proclaimed to-day for the first time, it would, for many reasons, exercise no influence at all. The Roman priests, as already noted, founded the European kingdoms and for a long time exercised almost supreme power in them. What we call Western civilisation used to be spoken of as Christendom. The power of the Roman priests and the influence of the Oriental religion established in ancient Rome has greatly diminished with the increased power of other owners of property and the advance of knowledge, until it is to-day but a shadow of what it was formerly. Nevertheless every change in the distribution of power and every advance in knowledge has had, and still has, to reckon with the power and influence of Roman priests and of the Oriental religion established in ancient Rome during the fifth century. Modern knowledge, for instance, has been at each step of its advance opposed by the Roman priests as contrary to the religion of ancient Rome. The expedition of Columbus which resulted in the discovery of America was thus opposed by Roman

priests. The beginnings of modern astronomy were similarly opposed. So were the beginnings of geology and of biology. So is any account of history which does not appear to favour the religion of ancient Rome. So is any proposal to alleviate human suffering, such as the introduction of chloroform, the use of contraceptives, the reform of marriage institutions, the abolition of wage-slavery. Existing systems of education in modern schools and universities are obliged to show at least outward conformity to the Oriental views introduced into ancient Rome. So is modern literature, so are public utterances in the Press, on the stage, through the radio. It is in fact still not inaccurate to describe Western civilisation as Christendom, after the theocratic system which obtained in the last days of ancient Rome and in the ages of barbarism which followed.

The structure of modern Western civilisation is, then, not the result or expression of modern thought, but of mediæval ideas, and far from being the fruit of accumulated knowledge and wisdom, it appears, on the contrary, to be the result of ancient abuses. The



discrepancies which may be noted between modern thought and knowledge and various aspects of the structure are consequences of the fact that the system has been handed down and perpetuated by tradition and by established institutions shaped by tradition, whereas thought and knowledge, although they are also largely handed down by tradition, are capable of changing and advancing much more easily and rapidly than established systems of anti-social organisation and established institutions.

Nor have the organisation and the institutions handed down by mediæval tradition become substantially altered or modified. While great care and ingenuity have been expended on regulating the working of civilised communities in accordance with modern experience, no less care and ingenuity have been employed in preserving unchanged the framework handed down from the Middle Ages. The Constitution of the United States of America, for example, certainly appears a much more enlightened foundation for a great civilised nation than the statutes drawn up by Roman priests when they made the chieftain

Clothwig, at the head of his five thousand ruffians, King of France. Nevertheless the reason why the United States of America are a proud and independent sovereign nation which has often held to the view that the rest of mankind is no concern of its people is precisely the same tradition of sovereign independence which was taken for granted in founding the kingdom of the barbarian bandit. The United States have had their origin in wholehearted protest against autocratic tyranny. Nevertheless they have taken over in a large measure the traditional structure of an autocratic state. They expect and demand boundless loyalty and devotion from their citizens. Should occasion require they claim to dispose of the very lives of those citizens. The obligation is not, however, reciprocal. The government of the United States does not assume responsibility for the lives of American citizens. Should an American citizen die of starvation in the midst of unprecedented wealth, the State does not hold itself responsible for his death. When some seven million citizens of the United States are on the brink of starvation, the government of the United States

generously appeals to Christian charity to afford some relief to their condition, but makes it clear that this is merely a noble expression of its humane and high-minded sentiments, and that it is under no obligation whatever to take any step concerning so irrelevant a matter. Why that seemingly incongruous disparity between the obligations of the citizen toward the State and the obligations of the State toward the citizen? The reason lies in the fact that the great, free, democratic republic of America has taken over its conception of what constitutes a civilised state from ancient autocracies in which an absolute ruler was regarded as disposing at his pleasure of the lives of his subjects, while he was not bound by any corresponding obligations toward them. The great American republic is a modern and enlightened state, but its constitutional structure is traditionally derived from the most antique autocracies of the earliest civilisations.

What is true of the general structure is equally true of innumerable details of that structure. For example, in framing the Constitution of the United States it was thought

proper to have, besides a federal parliament or House of Representatives, an upper legislative chamber, or Senate. The advantages are not obvious, the disadvantages are many. The machinery of government is far too complicated. But an upper chamber was regarded as right and proper because feudal England was governed by an assembly of feudal lords which overruled the pretence of democratic government by the House of Commons, and which is to-day one of the chief obstacles to government in England. The Puritans who founded New England and so largely influenced the building of the United States were not led by Roman priests. They were intensely opposed to Roman priests. Nevertheless the fact that the Puritan founders of the United States were above all inspired by religious zeal and ideas which bore in some respects the appearance of fierce fanaticism was due to the accidental circumstance that the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. happened to be the Oriental religion it was. The people of the United States of America regard themselves as more "modern" than any other portion of Western civilisation. They are proud of what

they term their youthful, or what their less enthusiastic admirers might call their childish, energy. Yet in all fundamental essentials the structure of Western civilisation in America is not modern at all, but mediæval. It does not date from the year 1787, but from the Dark Ages. Speaking accurately, it is from the Roman priests of the fifth century A.D. that the United States of America derive the framework of their political structure, of their social-economic structure, of their religion.

Western civilisation is not a modern product. It is not the result of a considered organisation of human society in the light of available wisdom and experience. Its structure has been handed down from ancient, barbarous, and savage times. That handing down and taking over is termed tradition. For reasons presently to be noted the word has an impressive sound. People sometimes speak with feelings of pride of the venerable tradition which civilisation represents. But what the fact really implies is that civilisation has never been the outcome of any attempt to organise social life in accordance with available knowledge and experience. The remark is sometimes made that under the

veneer of civilisation men and women often prove themselves to be barbarians and savages. The remark is misleading. The barbarism and the savagery are not so much characteristics of men and women as of the structure of the civilisation in which they live.

Western civilisation is often spoken of as capitalistic civilisation. It is also said to be nationalistic or imperialistic. It used to be, and may still be justly called Christian civilisation. But the Christianity, the nationalism, the imperialism, the individualistic capitalism of Western civilisation are one and all outcomes of tradition. Those features have not been devised by modern humanity. They have drifted down from the barbaric ages of the past.

The criticisms which are to-day directed against the structure of Western civilisation generally have in view some particular aspect of it. They may be directed against its economic structure ; they may be directed against the nationalistic structure which renders devastating wars inevitable ; they may be directed against its moral and intellectual structure. But those aspects are but the facets of a more general and fundamental fact. Civilisation is

not the outcome of any deliberate attempt to organise human society under the guidance of principles of reason or justice. Its structure has drifted down from ancient times on the authority of tradition. That tradition has not only been taken over and accepted, it has been zealously guarded, propagated, and maintained. The structure rests neither upon reason nor justice, nor on any plan of social organisation, but on tradition. Western civilisation is not merely a capitalistic, nationalistic, Christian civilisation. It is a traditional civilisation.

### CHAPTER III

## TRADITION

CIVILISATION is, plainly, much more than a concrete material structure. It is a mental structure. Its achievements are triumphs of the powers of the human mind. Through those powers the race arose in primeval times out of animality ; by the same powers the arts and the material culture of humanity were brought into being ; by them modern science and the control over physical forces which mark the outward aspects of modern civilisation have been achieved. Those powers consist entirely in the faculty which human thought possesses of adapting itself to facts, of apprehending its actual relation to them, and of so shaping its judgment and conclusions in accordance with experience that its expectations shall be realised by the event, and human behaviour may thus be effectively adapted to actual conditions. The efficiency of human intelligence is the result of a long process which goes back to the beginnings of life, and by which the severest



penalties have been imposed upon behaviour which does not accord with facts. The whole of history and in particular the triumphs of science bear witness to the efficiency of those powers.

Yet while the achievements of human intelligence are objects of wonder, those opinions of human beings which have a direct or indirect bearing upon their social relations and collective conduct are commonly open to the charge of folly. The same intelligence which weighs the stars, dissects the atom, devises mechanical marvels, appears powerless to cast off the incubus of barbarism, to put an end to the terror of war, to compass ordinary security and decency for human life. That same intelligence which sounds the mysteries of matter and of life is also manifested in a turmoil of passionate opinions which surpass in grotesqueness the ravings of savage superstition. Within one and the same civilised community, in the capital of the United States, for example, are to be found scientists efficiently employed in probing the mechanisms of nature, in elucidating the laws of human development, while within a stone's throw of their studies and

laboratories the destinies of the civilised world are being blindly headed for disaster by corrupt and ignorant politicians, and civic officials are employed in issuing licences to fortune-tellers and phrenologists to trade on human imbecility and ignorance.

It is customary to set down those contrasts to the frailty and inconsistency of human nature. But that traditional assumption is itself a part of the very cause which is responsible for the stridency of the contrast. It is part of the deliberate and systematic shifting of the responsibility for every effect of the traditional structure of civilisation on to human nature or some other convenient scapegoat. If the mind of man shows itself capable in one direction of achievements which strike wonder, while in other respects it manifests a folly and stupidity which are no less amazing, that is because in the one case inherited intelligence operates normally in the fulfilment of its natural functions, while in the other its natural operation is paralysed and stultified.

That crippling of human intelligence is an inevitable consequence of the structure of traditional civilisation.

Like that structure, the human mind is a product of tradition. It need be none the worse on that account. Social tradition is far from being a handicap to the human mind. On the contrary. The enormous development of its powers is due entirely to the transmission of experience and knowledge by tradition. The differences between an intelligent twentieth-century man and a Stone-Age savage are almost entirely due to that circumstance. Modern man is enormously more intelligent. Not that his brain is more highly developed or his wits sharper and more alert. The contrary may be the case ; the Stone-Age savage who first used fire or devised a bow and arrows was probably as gifted as the majority of intelligent men are to-day. But the data with which the intelligence of modern man is equipped are incomparably richer, more accurate, and more effective. And not only does he dispose of more and better data of thought, his intelligence, his capacity to distinguish between fact and fiction, between sense and nonsense, is, thanks to the accumulated effects of critical and analytical thought which has operated through numerous generations, greater than that of savage or

mediæval man. Modern man truly owes his intelligence to the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind transmitted through the process of tradition.

But that power of tradition to enlarge and increase intelligence is conditional upon the provision that what it transmits shall not be accepted on the authority of tradition. The greater part of knowledge is accepted on authority, since it is impossible for any person to check its worth in every instance. But it is accepted on the understanding and assumption that, were one to take the trouble to verify its validity it would be proved to be satisfactory. The obvious danger of thus accepting knowledge on authority is more apparent than real, for mental material transmitted by tradition is constantly being verified and subjected to criticism. The danger does not lie in traditional knowledge, but in endowing tradition itself with valid authority.

That is an entirely different matter. Tradition is not a ground of judgment. In a pragmatical sense the judgment which rests upon the authority of tradition is devoid of foundation. None of the achievements of science, none

of the triumphs of civilisation could have been achieved on the authority of tradition. It would not be possible, for instance, to construct a machine on the authority of tradition. Tradition may in some instances supply evidence. In many questions of history the only available authority is that of tradition. Certain things are reported to have happened, and no other evidence is at hand. We deeply regret in such instances the absence of better grounds for judgment, and we use our discretion as to the degree of credibility that attaches to it in the particular instance. But apart from such use which may be made of tradition as the poorest sort of evidence in matters of history, tradition has no logical authority at all. When an opinion is said to be founded upon the authority of tradition, it might as well be said that it is destitute of ground.

Yet the authority of tradition is still some times adduced as a quite impressive ground for opinions. An opinion is not infrequently said to be true because it has always been regarded as true. And when that kind of justification is given for an opinion, the opinion is usually held with an arrogance and persistence which

defies evidence and logic. That reliance on the authority of tradition is, like much else, set down to a natural failing of the human mind. It is a form of inertia or laziness, we are told. But such a disposition constitutes but a very trifling factor in the authority exercised by tradition.

Formerly that authority was openly upheld without any apology. It was even, in the earliest periods of Western civilisation, expressly declared to be the supreme, and indeed the only, admissible ground for opinion. All other grounds of judgment, even to the testimony of the senses, were ruled out when opposed to the authority of tradition. This is, of course, still the fundamental principle of the Roman Catholic Church, the purest survival of the barbarous Middle Ages. When the authority of tradition is discussed many at once think of religious tradition, which causes the opinions of persons living in the twentieth century to be governed by the religious ideas of the ancient Romans or of the ancient Hebrews. Religious traditional authority is, it is true, the most conspicuous example of the influence claimed and exercised by the authority of tradition. But

it is not by a long way the only one. Not alone the religion of Western civilisation, but the whole of its political and social structure rests upon that authority. The same importance is therefore attached to upholding the traditional authority of political, social, or economic principles as that of religious beliefs.

Appeal to that authority is not nowadays usually made as openly and directly as it formerly was. Reference to ostensible grounds, to facts, and even to figures, is commonly substituted. Means are devised of rationalising opinions and sentiments which formerly rested, and were declared to rest, upon the authority of tradition. Patriotism, the various rights of property, the duties of loyalty and submission to established authority, approved sentiments favourable to existing institutions, moral principles, all of which were not long since regarded as axiomatic and as entitled to be honoured and accepted on traditional grounds alone, are now justified by the aid of various reasons, theories, evidences, facts. By a curious coincidence the philosophical arguments, the theories, the researches and discoveries of accredited thinkers and scientists are found to

confirm those opinions which were lately held to rest upon the sole and sufficient authority of established tradition and to stand in need of no other foundation. Entire sciences, such as a science of economics, of sociology, of anthropology, and even of biology, have been so interpreted and illustrated as to supply rationalised substitutes for the authority of tradition. Indeed the whole of modern influential and reputable literature, of academic science, of what is termed the culture of the Western world is in a large measure devoted to providing such substitutes, and to imparting an appearance of valid support to opinions and principles which were formerly held to rest on traditional authority alone.

On the other hand no less energy is devoted to silencing expressions of opinion and to setting aside facts which appear unfavourable to the structure and institutions of traditional civilisation. Such views are usually referred to, when, for example, their commercial value is being discussed, as unpopular. The description is not quite correct. Opinions founded upon valid grounds are much more popular with a considerable proportion of modern men and



women than opinions which merely support established institutions. But they are not popular with those who derive profit from those institutions and who in a democratic modern society happen to be those who exercise most power and influence. And such is the character of the social structure in which their power and influence is dominant that these can be used to great effect in suppressing, refuting, silencing, and discrediting those alleged unpopular opinions, so that people who are prudently alive to their concrete interests are disposed to think twice before expressing such opinions, and publishers or editors are prone to deplore that pressure of space and circumstances over which they have no control do not permit of their giving publicity to unpopular facts and opinions, that is to say, to facts and opinions not in harmony with the authority of tradition.

Until comparatively lately much cruder means were employed to control the human mind and to protect it from opinions which might endanger its loyalty to established institutions and traditions. Views unfavourable to the latter were suppressed by imprisoning or

burning alive those who held them. Similar measures have been adopted since the human race first became civilised. We congratulate ourselves that those methods have been abandoned and that unpopular opinions may to-day be uttered without incurring the danger of being burnt alive. But the desire to propagate traditional opinions having no valid grounds and to suppress dangerous expressions of intelligence is no less strong and active to-day than when those cruder methods were employed. And although less spectacular means are now adopted to fulfil that desire, it is questionable whether they are less prejudicial to the operation of human intelligence. They are very much more insidious and specious. The ingenuity with which they assume the disguise of liberal and judicial thought, the devious adroitness which they display in the art of subtle misrepresentation, the indirect discrediting of "unpopular" thinkers are in many respects more effective in the stultifying of intelligence than was the violence of cruder methods. The control of the mind through the enormously developed channels of propaganda is, if anything, carried out more effectively

by modern democratic civilisation than by mediæval Spain.

The purpose of that stultification of the natural functions of human intelligence is the same to-day as it has been through seven thousand years of traditional civilisation. It has nothing to do with the deficiencies or incapacities to which the human mind is naturally subject. It is the necessary and inevitable effect of the traditional structure of civilisation. That structure has solely in view the maintenance of the power of a ruling class. To maintain the *status quo* of that structure is the purpose to which all others are subordinate. In order to achieve it the natural functioning of human intelligence must be perverted. It is necessary that men should be prevented from apprehending and analysing their actual relations to facts. It is necessary that they should be rendered unable to form rational judgments and conclusions. It is necessary that ideas and opinions should accord with the authority of tradition, because upon that authority alone can the structure and institutions handed down from barbarism and savagery to modern civilisation be defended and justified. Unless loyalty can

by those means be successfully inculcated and maintained, no organisation operating for the profit of a limited class at the expense of the bulk of mankind could be safeguarded from destruction for a day. Force would not avail. Only by controlling the human mind itself, by checking and defeating the natural operation of intelligence can the task be carried out. Hence that intelligence which, where those vital interests are not at stake, where they are furthered by the achievements of knowledge, shows itself to be capable of exploits to which it appears difficult to set a bound, is reduced to impotence, puerility and imbecility where social conditions, human relations, and human interests are directly or indirectly involved.

It is often said, half in jest, half in earnest, that the world is mad. To provide for the defeat of the natural functions of intelligence is in fact to produce a state of dementia. The insanity sometimes ascribed to civilised humanity is no less pathological for being collective. But again, as in the case of the barbarism and savagery which are said to burst forth through the veneer of civilisation, the charge is commonly laid at the wrong door.

That men and women are naturally disposed to defeat the functions which their natural intelligence is constructed to perform is not true. That is not at all a character of human nature outside asylums. It is a character imposed upon the minds of men and women by a traditional civilisation which can be maintained only on the condition that the myths upon which its existence depends shall be accepted, and that the human race shall be so deprived of the use of its intelligence as to be able to accept them loyally.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE CYCLES OF CIVILISATION

**M**ODERN Western civilisation is the last of a long succession of similar organisations which, however much they may have differed from it in their setting and external vesture, were identical with it in the basic principles of their framework. Each has been established with a view to affording profit to privileged classes through power over men and through property-owning, and has been chiefly concerned with the maintenance of that structure.

Every one of those traditional civilisations has failed. Each has ended after a shorter or longer career in collapse and complete disintegration.

The one fact which emerges from shelf-loads of historical philosophising is that civilisations have their day, rise to a short-lived term of prosperity and power, suffer a rapid or prolonged decline, and end in final dissolution. That is the sum of indisputable fact which philosophies of history, from the theories of

Vico to those of Flinders Petrie and Spengler, have been able to extract from their survey. Why this should happen those philosophers have not even vaguely indicated. The career of civilisations has commonly been likened to the course of individual life, its youth, maturity, senility, and death. Obvious as the simile, there is not the slightest ground for assuming that it represents any real similarity between the two processes. Races of animals do not become extinct because they become senile, but because they fail to adapt themselves to changing conditions. The rudest human races, as for instance the aborigines of Australia, have continued in much the same state of culture for a longer period of time than the Chinese, the Egyptians, or the Romans. They have never until the coming of the white man had occasion to adapt themselves to any considerable change of conditions. There is no indication that what we call the lower cultures are subject to inevitable cycles of growth and decline. At the end of the Old Stone Age there was in Europe a period of remarkable artistic activity which was followed by the Neolithic Age in which material culture became much more

highly advanced. But we do not know enough of the factors involved in those events to apply the theory of cycles to prehistoric times. The phenomenon is, so far as we can tell, manifested by traditional civilisations, not by human culture in general.

Why this should be so is readily intelligible. Since a traditional civilisation is not, properly speaking, a social organisation, but an organisation of profitable dominating power, it is above all concerned with maintaining itself unchanged. To preserve unaltered the conditions upon which the profit of the ruling classes depends is its paramount purpose. Any modification of the existing order is a menace to the security of the power and profit which it is the sole object of the organisation to promote and safeguard.

To devote every effort to maintaining a cultural and social structure unchanged is the very way to destroy it. Incapacity to change, to adapt themselves to altered conditions is, in fact, the usual manner in which organisms and races perish. It is the usual process by which failures are eliminated. Progress may be an abstract ideal, but the need for adjustment to



everchanging conditions is not. It is an imperative vital necessity. The organism, the race, the culture which is incapable of carrying out that necessary requirement perishes. Yet to resist adaptation, to maintain the *status quo*, is the supreme concern of any civilisation founded upon the traditional privileges of a class. It need not decay. It need only remain unchanged. The causes of its apparent decay and dissolution are present in its constitution from the first. Times change. The very powers, the very resources which a successful civilisation creates give rise to change. But that change cannot be accepted. The interests which dominate the established order could not consent to any change in that order without endangering their security. For them to do so would be to commit suicide. In a theocracy the class of priests cannot admit any reform in religious ideas or any change to secular rule. A military class cannot allow the advantages of peace or any form of security other than military force. An autocracy or aristocracy is incapable of apprehending the merits of democratic freedom. To a civilisation founded upon predatory individualism and private ownership

nothing can be more heinous than economic social organisation. The immutability of the existing order is the foundation of the faith embodied in the religion of nationalistic patriotism. To the Roman of the decadence the Empire was the one eternal fact which no change of time could alter ; the English Tory declared on the eve of the first Reform Bill that the British Constitution was incapable of improvement and would last for ever ; the ridiculous American politician proclaims with unblushing asininity that " the American economic system and the American political system are everlasting." A traditional civilisation must needs cling to the tradition which it embodies. In doing so it is clinging to its very existence. Yet in doing so it is compassing its own inevitable death.

That paramount anxiety to preserve their social structure unchanged arises solely from the fact that traditional civilisations are not social organisations. An organisation established for the purpose of advancing the common interest has no motive for resisting change and adaptation. Change, in those circumstances, can mean only the employment of

more effective means for carrying out its purpose. The enormous importance attached to the conservation of established order, to the maintenance of glorious traditions, of sacred and inviolable constitutions, the horror of change, are consequences, not of any natural and spontaneous conservatism, but of the absence of social organisation.

A structure which is not a social organisation, but one designed for the profit of power-holders, is not only incapable of adaptation, but is inevitably unstable and exposed to constant peril. It is particularly liable to the very change which it dreads above all. Profitable power is resented, coveted, contested. History is one long record of desperate struggles for the possession of power. The strifes of empires, states, nations, fill the bloody annals with the records of wars. The monotonous and sickening tale presents but one aspect of the perpetual struggle for dominant power, which has taken place no less constantly within every system of domination than between one state and others. Priests and war-leaders have rent one another in the struggle, autocratic rulers and aristocracies, landowners, trading burghers,

industrialists, rival interests, parties, factions have waged an unceasing contest. The course of traditional civilisations is a perpetual strife and struggle for power, whether waged between consolidated territorial systems or within them. Here again the myth of tradition has been wont to picture that ceaseless and desperate strife as inevitable. Wars, it has been asserted, are inevitable, struggles for power are inevitable. They appertain to the nature of things, to human nature, to the nature of human society. They, in truth, appertain to the nature of traditional civilisation which is concerned with that very power which is the object of contention. Internecine strife for the possession of power is no less inevitable as a consequence of that structure than are international wars. Privileged power derived from domination over men can exist only under challenge. It sits under a sword of Damocles. It is from the very nature of its situation doomed, sooner or later, to succumb.

An anti-social organisation of power is not only under the necessity of maintaining itself unchanged, but of preserving equally unchanged the entire mental structure of ideas

and values, principles and traditions, upon which it rests. Physical force is not so important a factor in the maintenance of power as is commonly supposed. It has its uses. The control of physical, and more especially of economic, means of compulsion is important. But, in general, reliance upon force, the multiplication of policemen, the display of machine-guns and tear-bombs, which we are becoming accustomed to associate with the maintenance of civilisation, are signs of weakness. They are indications of a desperate plight. All the policemen and bombing-planes in the world could not avail were not the minds of people successfully maintained in a condition of incapacity. It is not the unarmed condition of the oppressed which renders them powerless ; it is their stupidity.

Traditional civilisations do not rest primarily upon physical force or even economic compulsion. They rest on loyalty. The oldest civilisations were, it appears, established by priests. They had little occasion to use policemen and bombs. They used theology. That proved much more effective. The people were not enslaved by force, they were enslaved by

faith, passionate, devout, loyal. Their theocratic rulers were not averse on principle to the use of force. They occasionally flayed alive those who were in arrear in the payment of their taxes, and they had a habit of roasting children to encourage the others. But on the whole their rule was mild. And they were entirely successful in stripping the people completely of the fruit of their labour and in getting them to toil peacefully till they dropped under the whips of their slave-drivers. There is under a theological regimen, whether in the ancient East or in mediæval Europe, a remarkable absence of labour trouble. Successive civilisations have maintained their power by means of modified forms of loyalty founded upon mythology exactly similar to those which served as the foundation of theocratic rule. Hence the myth of civilisation which represents it as a social organisation established by the collective efforts of mankind, and conducted in its interest and for its welfare. The entire system of ideas, the ideology, as it is barbarously but conveniently termed, of traditional civilisation is concerned with so editing experience and disguising facts that they may accord with the

fiction. Upon that ideology, far more than upon any compulsive force, the structure rests. The mind of humanity, the product of accumulated tradition, is thus diverted from its biological function. It is no longer concerned with being in accord with facts and experience, but with the fictions necessary to the security of civilisation.

All civilisations have created the means of developing material and mental culture as no uncivilised society ever could. As soon as the control of a dominant ruling class becomes established a rapid cultural growth results. Cities, palaces are built—civilisation means literally living in cities—the land is irrigated, it is made to yield its wealth, riches are brought from remote lands. Arts are born anew and deck the cities with beauty and luxury. The practice of writing is developed, experience is stored, sciences are created, learning flourishes. That cultural development which raises human activity to a new plane and puts to shame the rude and ignorant savage is the result of the division and specialisation of labour rendered possible by the control of multitudes, of the enormously enlarged power of human purpose

using millions of hands as its instruments, of leisure, of freedom from the organic hand to mouth struggle.

But that cultural achievement is subject to the same conditions as the social structure upon which it depends. To extend those conquests which add to the amenity and magnificence of their lives would seem to be the natural desire of dominating classes. In point of fact these show themselves strangely distrustful of any development in the culture which they have brought into being. The haunting fear of change, the distrust of innovation, the importance of preserving the sacred foundations of tradition outweigh all other motives and considerations. Nothing is more striking in cultural history than the complete arrest of growth in the ancient civilisations of the East, their decay and degradation after the first brilliant spurt of their initial rise. For the culmination of Western Asian culture, the archæologist has to delve into the most ancient strata of prehistoric beginnings. After that brief ancient splendour, the record is one of palpable decay. Egyptian civilisation reached its zenith in the old Memphitic Empire ; the



thousands of years that followed are a tale of decadence. Artistic, technical, mental decay set in as soon as the first outburst of achievement has taken place. Subsequent ages added nothing.<sup>1</sup> The same phenomenon is repeated in all cultural growths. The height of Greek culture was reached early and marked also the onset of decay. In Rome the assimilation of Greek civilisation coincided with the beginning of continuous decadence. In the artistic efflorescence of the Italian Renaissance Raphael and Michelangelo may indifferently be regarded as marking the height of achievement or the first manifestations of rapid decay. The English aristocracy looked with horror on the development of commerce and the advent of machinery. They opposed the introduction of automobiles, and some of the most exclusive feudal nobility may to this day be seen driving in horse carriages with a footman on the box.

In industrialised civilisation, where the development of mechanical and scientific devices has become the chief source of wealth and power, that extension of material culture

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion and illustration of the phenomenon, see the author's *Rational Evolution*, Ch. V.

becomes an object of paramount concern to the dominating classes. Progress, in the sense of material and mechanical advance, becomes the slogan. Science, which furnishes the means of that progress, is consecrated as a fetish. But even that assimilation of science and progress with ruling interests does not avail to elude the inherent conditions of decay. Apart from the enormous intensification of social inconsistencies and incompatibilities to which industrial civilisation gives rise, the very powers of mechanical progress and science suffer the inevitable effects of subordination to other ends. Like all thought, like art, like literature, commercialised science, degraded and prostituted, tends to become cut off from the sources whence it drew life. It sinks into technology, becomes the unintelligent pursuit of narrow specialists, of "fact-finders," mass-produced in laboratories and catch-penny universities, drilled into mechanical team-work, fed on formulas, lacking every background of wide culture, of basic principles, of large outlooks, repudiating and despising these. Sterilised and vulgarised pseudo-sciences are set up by lust for marketable profit as clay idols in the place of the

scientific spirit. The greater the advance of science, the nearer it approaches to regions where those qualities are called for that have become most lacking. Organised scientific efficiency, enrolled in the interests of commercialism has not been remarkably productive. The most significant fruits of contemporary science, the work of Einstein, Rutherford, the Curies, Pavlov, Freud, have been achieved by solitary students cut off from the teams of commercially endowed "efficient organisation," from the forcing houses of scientific research.

Human intelligence cannot with impunity be diverted from its natural functions. When it becomes enlisted in the service of interests, be they theological, patriotic, or commercial, it suffers profound injury. By the very character and anti-social structure of traditional civilisations, their mental decay is assured. They move in a vicious circle from which there is no escape. The more effective the dominant power which rules them, the greater is the opposition which it invites. The more it is menaced, the more desperately does it cling to the mythical ideology upon which it is founded, the more

incapable therefore does it become of using the intelligence which, for its own purposes, it has deliberately crippled.

Every traditional civilisation established and maintained for the profit of a power-holding class is subject to the same inevitable process. It is doomed because it is an anti-social structure, because it rests upon a fictitious basis of traditional authority, because it is committed to maintaining it by crippling the powers of human intelligence, and to resisting change and adaptation.

## CHAPTER V

### MENTAL DECAY

**T**HE PRESERVATION of traditional ideology, vital to the protection of the existing order, is not wholly a fraudulent imposture, whatever deliberate fraud and imposture may be employed. To maintain the loyalty upon which the structure depends is the primary function of the process. But the loyal subjected classes are not the sole victims. The holders of power suffer no less profoundly from the effects of the process by which intelligence is sabotaged. Whatever mental superiority, ability, shrewdness may have gone to the building up of their dominance, whatever advantages of leisurely mental cultivation they may enjoy, their minds cannot escape the results of the subordination of all their activities and values to the task imposed by the social structure.

Those effects are for the most part inconspicuous so long as the activity of the dominant classes can still be creative and their enterprise prospers. The mental aspects of that enterprise

are as a rule no less brilliant than the material results. They are in keeping with it. They are a manifestation of energy and intellectual activity which cannot but command admiration. A vital type is created which is heightened by self-confidence and triumph. "Every elevation of the type of man," says Nietzsche, with an eye upon its vital energy and efficiency, "is the product of an aristocratic society." But that elevation holds good so long only as it is triumphant, as it remains, that is, adapted to the conditions which permit for a time of its success. As soon as inevitable change follows upon that brief period, as soon as the inherent causes of its failure begin to tell, what appeared as qualities and elicited admiration assumes another aspect. In some barbaric societies brute strength and physical courage are accounted the sum of human excellence. Later they come to be despised. So with those qualities which achieve temporary success in the strife for power. Energy and daring become blind obstinacy, ingenuity becomes cunning and subterfuge, intellectual adventure becomes effete traditionalism. With the decay of the structure of dominant power, the mental

structure erected upon invalid and fraudulent foundations collapses in the same manner. The mind which was able to seize the opportunities of success is unable to cope with the causes of failure which it refuses to recognise. Inefficiency and decrepitude increase in proportion to inadaptation. The more the traditional ideology becomes incompatible with actual conditions, the more boldly does it resort to intellectual dishonesty and the more completely does it cripple its own powers of coping with the situation. Dominant rulers are quick to perceive their immediate and concrete interests, they are increasingly incapable of perceiving their ultimate interests when these have become the main issue. Hence the recurrent spectacle of power-holders who have been the builders of a structure which seemed a triumph of shrewdness and acumen, confronting their ultimate doom with a blind, obstinate stupidity, a complacent unapprehension, which hasten their course to disaster.

The phenomenon is exhibited in the history of every culture. The theocratic cultures of the ancient East which laid the foundations of all subsequent arts and sciences survived, after the

first brief flush of their achievement, only as a byword of mental decrepitude. The old priests were thoroughly satisfied with themselves. They went on mumbling their charms and their fables. They alone possessed the ancient wisdom, and they looked down with benevolent pity upon a world of new-fangled ideas.

The first European civilisation, while it retained the traditional social structure, and Aristotle discoursed upon the fairness and wisdom of the institution of slavery, which could not be challenged without subverting the foundations of all social order, had set aside the authority of tradition in its mental life. It had for a long period checked the power of priests. Not until that civilisation began to suffer the nemesis of social misconstruction, as the wealth of the latifundists increased and with it the destitution and misery of dispossessed *coloni*, did its resistance to Oriental priestly tradition weaken and fail, and intellectual realism break down into mysticism.

The second European civilisation which began under that incubus appeared during the dark ages of priestly domination to be about to incur the fate of Oriental theocracies. The



eastern portion of the Roman Empire did in fact suffer the same mummified living death as the old Eastern empires. But the legacy of the secular culture of Greece and Rome saved Europe as a whole from the fate of the Byzantine Empire. It made possible the constant revolt of human thought against the tradition imposed by the interests of ruling power, the ceaseless strife for liberation which marks Western civilisation. Yet that redeeming influence could be only partial and sporadic. Wherever strong authority has succeeded in maintaining the sacred character of tradition with overwhelming power, mental death, not the strife and agony of struggle, has been its fate. In Spain, for example, where the proud boast of rulers was that disloyalty and infidelity had been completely eradicated, the paralysis fell upon a gifted people which has for centuries lain in a death-coma, seemingly beyond the hope of redemption.

The secular tradition of loyalty to established power, though less completely paralysing than theocratic stupefaction—because contending interests do not permit of the complete surrender of the mind which religious stultification

secures—yet brings about in the end a similar decrepitude. The effect is most marked where the tradition is most firmly consolidated. Of such a condition, England offers to-day an outstanding example.

The nineteenth century, which marked the pinnacle of Western traditional civilisation is, even outside England, known as the Victorian age. It was the English age. England it was, which had ushered in the monstrous expansion of power conferred upon the predatory individual, known as the industrial revolution. From the ownership of land, the basic form of appropriation of social necessities by the individual, predatory power had become extended to such a degree as to set no limit to exploitation—no limit except the complete despoliation and destitution of the exploited. England which had been the first to avail itself of that hypertrophied power was dominant in Western civilisation during its brief transit through its zenith.

The Victorian age, the English age, is chiefly associated in the modern mind with the stuffy unreality of conventions, with a blinkered outlook of smug complacency. But it was also, be it

remembered, an age of unparalleled achievement and activity, of enthusiasm, of creative power, of discovery. Apathy and dullness were certainly not its characteristics. It lived a false existence, its efforts toward the fullness of life suffered from a radical handicap. But it lived.

The English Victorian age was the full blossoming of a tradition that was peculiarly and distinctively English. So definite is that tradition that in accordance with one of the most ineradicable misconceptions of current traditional ideas, it is looked upon as characteristic of the English race. There is no English race. The population of England is one of the most composite that can be found and each of its component stocks has manifested at one time characteristics which would be accounted utterly un-English. The Norman feudal nobility were formerly marked by the mercurial excitability and fickleness which popular national psychology ascribes to Frenchmen. The populace of England were noted for their pleasure-loving frivolity and their disposition to lewdness and irreverence. What are called English characteristics are the results of a tradition, and are so definite and well-marked

because that tradition is one of the most sharply defined in Western civilisation, being for the most part consequences of one definite cause. It is the most purely aristocratic tradition in the modern world, and is the consequence of the fact that England has been continuously ruled by the most powerful and unchallenged of privileged classes. The centralised power of the throne which, on the Continent, curbed the power of the feudal nobility was prevented from ever developing because, Britain being an island, no pretext existed there for raising a royal standing army. The feudal rulers had therefore no rivals who could effectively oppose them. The power of the foreign Roman Church, which could do nothing by alliance with a powerless throne, was inevitably shaken off, and an English church created as the organ of the feudal ruling class. England boasts above all of what it terms its sporting spirit, of its over-selfconscious code of fair play. It ascribes it to the game of cricket. The joke does not cause laughter. Such is the prestige of the aristocratic tradition. The so-called sporting spirit of English aristocratic tradition is the *esprit de corps* of the most strongly consolidated

of privileged ruling classes, whose whole interests have been centred upon preserving their privileges against encroachment. The right of primogeniture imposed by the need of preserving intact the family patrimonies into which England was parcelled out, necessitated the maintenance of the class tradition among younger sons. The possible heirs to the domains of English semi-kings had to be ear-marked for the exalted function. Even though they might be disinherited, they were English gentlemen, members of the all-but-divine class. The Public Schools, the Church-of-England Universities, the army—a form of club for English gentlemen—were shaped in accordance with their functions of preserving the tradition undefiled.

The only serious conflict which the rulers of England have had to face, since the old conflicts arising from the futile efforts of the throne to obtain a share of power which resulted in Magna Charta, Parliament and the English “liberties,” have been with the burgher classes, the commoners, the bourgeois. Such was the security of the feudal rulers that the position of English burghers was considerably more fortunate than that of corresponding classes on the

Continent, where they were plundered in turn by king, nobles, and priests. In England the burghers were played off by the aristocracy against the pretensions of the throne. The wealth and power of the feudal owners of England was such that they had little temptation to plunder and alienate the burghers. These grew rich by trade, but trade was ruled out as an occupation by the code of a landowning aristocracy, and merely contributed to the splendour of their power which made use of the trading burghers who supplied, beside the materials of a wealthy life, the sea-power essential to the external relations of the island castle of feudalism. The relation of the rulers of England to the commoners preserved a benevolent and paternal character, founded upon mutual interests, which has not existed on the Continent.

Yet the very prosperity and fortunate situation of the English burgher classes led to the fermentation among them of envy and resentment against the strictly protected privileges of their paternal rulers. It is an almost invariable rule that social envy, when not grounded upon actual injury and suffering, but rather upon

lesions inflicted to pride and self-esteem, takes the form of claims to superior righteousness. The gnawing irritation caused in the well-to-do English burgher classes by the privileges and pride of the aristocracy manifested itself in a sense of moral complacency. It was the occasion of Puritanism and of burgher revolt against the feudal Church of England, which was assimilated to Popery. Not until after the industrial revolution had still further enhanced the wealth of the well-to-do English burghers did their successful challenge compel the feudal owners to surrender the House of Commons, hitherto packed with younger sons, to the commoners. That revolution managed by a narrow margin to be bloodless. The rulers of England lived up to their tradition for skilful compromise in the face of the inevitable. By an unwritten, but rigorously observed pact, well-to-do burghers became recognised as English gentlemen and, in order to obliterate the older connotation of the term, English gentlemen consented to conform externally to the superior righteousness of the pious burghers.

The Victorian age became the pinnacle of English power and influence—although in it

might have clearly been read the signs also of its approaching doom. The most consistent and compact aristocratic tradition that the world had seen became the model of the age. The costume and the manners of English gentlemen were copied in every part of the globe. It was a model avidly assimilated by snobbery throughout Western civilisation. It was, in fact, a magnificent model. The manners and the clothes of English gentlemen (though not of English ladies, who were not the rulers of England) were the most impressive ever produced. With these reigned the no less defined cut of English aristocratic tradition. That tradition, adorned with the cultural polish which only the continued effect and supreme complacency of unchallenged power can impart, consistently eschewed intellectual conflict, controversy, discussion. Dignity was the fetish of the tradition, the literature, the thought of England. It was too proud to fight. It was too complacently secure to feel the need to do so. The criteria of all things in English tradition were that tradition itself, the things done and the things not done, the distinction between what was English and what was un-English—the most



scathing epithet by which anything could be condemned. Never in any age or country has there been so sharply defined a cultural tradition. Never has its subtle authority, exalted as a value standing even above ethical or moral values, been so firmly founded.

That tradition so definitely determined by the situation of the feudal aristocracy of England extended far beyond it. To be an English gentleman was regarded as partaking of the character of a moral virtue. The English Public Schools have for their object the manufacture of English gentlemen, an industrial process carried out by them with marvellous efficiency. The feudal aristocracy of England is now but an archæological survival. But the tradition perpetuated in the English Public Schools can only be obliterated with the obliteration of England.

Yet when the amazing and meteoric career of England shall come to be viewed in the large perspective of history, nothing will appear more remarkable than the sharp suddenness of her downfall. The Victorian age marked an apogee of almost undisputed power and influence such as few civilisations have known. Yet when the

remains of the English Queen who had typified Victorianism were borne across the Solent under the stormy sky of the first notable check offered to English imperialism by De Wet and his Boers, England was already on the downgrade and the knell of the English age had struck. When two decades later England staggered to her feet after the European war, she was in the midst of a changed world, a world in which the tradition of the magnificent English feudal aristocracy is as much out of place as any antique tradition archæologically reconstructed out of the Middle Ages or the ancient East.

Draped in the pride of that tradition England to-day swathes herself bravely in the tatters of her past glory. Most pathetic trait of all, she is unaware of what has happened. She cannot become aware of it without ceasing to be England. She dwells in a past age, the age of her former supremacy, the English age. Her fallen burgher princes dwell in the ruins of "converted" London mansions, much as did the Romans of the last days in the ruins of Roman palaces and villas. But their minds still dwell in the age of England's supremacy.

Mentally, intellectually, the collapse of England is more complete than the economic and political dissolution of her Empire. "If the English Public Schools were to be modified, England would cease to exist." The remark, frequently heard in England, is true in a more profound sense than is usually intended. The English Public Schools for the manufacture of English gentlemen are the guardians of the English tradition and the chief means of perpetuating it. They cannot change, the tradition cannot change, England cannot change. The aloofness from all things, all ideas, all thought un-English is of the essence of that tradition. To adapt itself to an un-English world, a world in which the English gentleman is no longer the supreme ideal, is, for England, a thing impossible to do, and almost impossible to contemplate. Even to admit the existence of such changed conditions would be un-English. The necessity of maintaining the illusion has tightened and intensified all the forces of English tradition, petrified them into a sardonic, defiant, silent stubbornness. The fabled ostrich-policy of eliminating facts by refusing to look at them does not exactly represent

the traditional English policy. Facts, ideas, thoughts, controversies are eliminated in England by not speaking about them. To cling to that tradition with intensified, almost desperate, loyalty is, in a world so changed, more than a matter of conservative sentiment ; it is a matter of life and death.

The inevitable result of that necessity is apparent to-day in a degree that might have seemed incredible. Never, except perhaps in the last moments of the agony of Roman civilisation, has intellectual decay been so rapid and so complete as in post-war England. That decay is not so much the effect of a degeneracy in the traditional mind of England, as of its unchanging persistence in the midst of a changed world. It is the effect of the same qualities which not long since imposed the prestige of her aristocratic tradition. To-day it is no longer applicable, it is no longer compatible with the transformed conditions, it is no longer possible. English thought accordingly, which could not continue to be English and adapt itself to those changed conditions, must perforce withdraw into a self-contained mental isolation. It cannot abdicate its

tradition. No other alternative is left for England but to ignore, in stubborn silence, the changed world, to go down, in accordance with her best tradition, with colours proudly nailed to the mast of the sinking ship.

Intellectually England is dead. Her thought no longer counts. Twenty years ago the question : " What is thought of this in England ? " was still pertinent. To-day it has no importance. English literature, the English Press, English thought, still scintillating with the superficial brilliancy of an ancient cultural tradition, are now, like the doddering culture of the ancient Orient in its dotage, redolent with the aroma of the grave. English intelligence is silent, reduced to helpless impotence by the sense of hopeless futility which oppresses it. What were the good ? Beyond the self-conscious frivolity of works of fiction, of gossiping memoirs, England has ceased to read. Serious literature has died a natural death. The English public Press which at one time fully merited its reputation as by far the finest in the world, has sunk to a level of inanity which causes amazement. It does not belong to the modern world, is scarcely aware of it.

The English mind is becoming daily more illiterate, religious, imbecile. It is sinking into new Dark Ages. Now that mediæval Austria, mediæval Spain have passed away, England is actually the most priest-ridden country in the world. Mental life has, in England, become extinct.

Such are the effects of the prestige and authority of a consolidated tradition when the prosperity of its power has successfully extinguished all opposition, all criteria of the validity of thought. As it was in the mummified theocracies of the ancient East, as it was in the Dark Ages of Christian Europe, so it is at this hour on the very morrow of the most brilliant triumphs of nineteenth-century civilisation.

The phenomena illustrated in the collapse of the English mind are, of course, not confined to it. Similar symptoms of mental decay are noticeable everywhere throughout Western civilisation. All thought exhibits a manifest decadence. One cause is the increasing difficulty experienced by thinkers and writers in being intellectually honest. They cannot be so without running counter to the views upon which traditional civilisation rests, without

being "unpopular." The increasing call made upon their thought to accommodate itself to compromises, trafficks, and dishonesties devitalises it. Language itself, its forms, its artistic standards, is the product of conditions which have passed and are no longer living and real. What is called good taste was dictated by an ideology which is deceased. The writer, like the thinker, has to relearn his art. He is cast adrift from the solid ground of agelong premises and flounders in an uncharted sea. Literature being compelled, either commercially or through timidity, to eschew what is vital and urgent in modern thought, seeks refuge in irrelevance, in cleverness, in spurious brilliancies and frivolities commercially negotiable, wholly dissociated from the actual realities of the world's life. Sitting aloft and aloof, it fiddles while Rome is burning.

All forms of art are in the same case. The graphic arts in revulsion from the prettiness and moralising which have lost all significance, strive hysterically toward aims which they are as yet unable to formulate. The mere spasm of revulsion and destructiveness, eccentricity, paranoia do duty for change of direction.

Modern music, which culminated in Brahms and Wagner, degenerates into hollow technical *tours de force* dissociated from emotional meaning, or into the barbarism of canned noise. Modern literature and modern art are those of a world which is destitute of convictions. Cut from its moorings, detached from traditions, the artistic, like the intellectual impulse fears or fails to face new directions, transfigured values, and takes refuge in the dissolution of cynicism and anarchy.

As has always happened, mental decay goes hand in hand with the economic, the social breakdown of a human world.



## CHAPTER VI

### MORAL INDIGNATION

THE STRUCTURE of traditional civilisation is sometimes said to be wicked and unjust. Those ethical terms are merely a special nomenclature which it has become customary to employ in speaking of what is anti-social. There is no evidence that wickedness and injustice, as such, call down upon themselves retributive punishment. Civilisations do not perish because they are wicked and unjust, but because they are impractical, unadapted to facts. They break down for the same reasons that an unintelligently constructed piece of machinery breaks down. But to be unintelligently constructed is, in regard to any organisation of human beings, the same thing as to be anti-social. And what is anti-social is currently termed evil and unjust.

Corrupted by the theological tradition of savage tabus that draw down the wrath of supernatural agencies, the human mind has pondered the problem of good and evil, accounting its solution an inscrutable attribute

of godlike wisdom : “ And ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Does not loyalty to a good social order require that men’s notion of good and evil should be effectively obfuscated ? The philosopher Kant, who analysed more acutely than any other the nature of knowledge, threw up his hands before the ethical riddle of good and evil, pronouncing the values to be categorical imperatives, intuitions of conscience lying outside the sphere of discussion.

The matter, which our professors of virtue continue to regard as a theme for abstruse, abstract, and obscure dissertations, is fairly simple. A person’s behaviour is said to be bad when we do not like it because it injures us. Murder is evil because people object to being murdered. Stealing is evil because people are apt to be irritated when they are robbed. Evil conduct in general consists in taking advantage of power or opportunity to injure other people. The distinction between evil conduct and good conduct arises solely from social circumstances and has therefore nothing to do with abstract qualities inherent in things, or with the order of the universe, or with divine commands, or

with categorical imperatives, or with laws inscribed in the conscience. It has to do with social relations and social conditions.

It follows that the social structure which constitutes civilisation, that is, the use made by powerful and privileged classes of their opportunity to injure, is evil. It is evil because those who do not enjoy the opportunity do not like it. They call the arrangement unjust. When they protest against an arrangement which they do not like, they say that they are demanding justice.

As usual, they are translating the facts of social relation into ethical terms and moral ideas. Even among quite intelligent people to-day, if justice is discussed, they will become grave and thoughtful, and will ask, "Who shall define justice?" The amusing question illustrates how completely the workings of the human mind have become corrupted and distorted by the formulas, labels, categories of tradition. When people ask for justice, all they are asking for is the suppression of injustice, or, in other words, the suppression of conduct which they do not like because it injures them. When they are injured by

injustice and demand justice, they are not thinking of abstract definitions or of categorical imperatives, or of any transcendental and obscure philosophical speculation. They are thinking of their injuries and of their interests. They are not fired by moral indignation, they are extremely angry because their interests suffer.

Traditional civilisations which are contrived by privileged classes for their own benefit are, as we noted, bound to decay because the minds of privileged persons are absorbed in the task of preserving their power, and are therefore averse to any change which might alter the structure of civilisation and call for an alteration in tradition. But there is another reason why traditional civilisations are bound to decline in power and to be destroyed. They are unjust. To be unjust is so serious a defect in the structure of a social system that it is fatal to it. Unjust social structures do not work. They fall to pieces. Unjust social arrangements are not destroyed because the universe is ruled by moral laws and punishes them who do evil. They are destroyed because people who suffer from injustice do

not like it. They resent it. Sooner or later they become fired with moral indignation at being treated unjustly, and they do all in their power to put down injustice. In doing so they are not inspired by sublime principles. They are inspired by anger, envy, malice, and hatred. Nevertheless, they are the spokesmen of morality, of ethics, of justice. Necessarily. For morality, ethics, justice are only high-sounding names for the angry, envious, and malicious feelings which are aroused in the minds of people when they are being injured.

That is why, by the way, it is quite impossible for justice or ethics, or good, to be dispensed by powerful and privileged classes. Not, at least, in any effective manner. A leisured and privileged person may be filled with that emotional exaltation which is sometimes felt when sublime abstractions are contemplated, such as the Good, the Beautiful, the True. He may be sincerely impelled to dispense justice, to defend the sacred cause of moral good. But he is incompetent to do so. He cannot, however sincere his intentions, be sufficiently angry and embittered, adequately filled with mean malice and hatred on

account of injuries which he does not feel. Only the good-for-nothing people who are failures, who have not had sufficient prudence to become members of the privileged classes can truly feel moral indignation, and defend the sacred cause of justice. Other people cannot do it properly, even if they want to. Queen Marie Antoinette was terribly distressed to hear that French people could not get bread. She suggested a plan to provide them with French pastry. She had no grasp of the situation.

If most people could to-day get a better grasp of the situation than Queen Marie Antoinette, nine-tenths of the deluge of nonsense which is daily being poured forth from Press and platform would be avoided. The idea is still widely prevalent that a civilisation founded upon the traditional arrangement of ruling and exploited classes can be gradually transformed from an unjust arrangement into a just one by the concern felt by privileged classes for justice, for the good of the people. There are thousands of books published showing how justice could be brought about if the ruling classes would

only consent to be a little less concerned with their own interests and could enter into the feelings of other people. There are countless societies, with large subscription lists and committees, which are busy showing people how justice can be established by cultivating fine sentiments. There is in America a person called Mr. Henry Ford who has a plan for saving civilisation. His plan consists in preventing the working classes from feeling angry by teaching them folk-dances. He has probably read somewhere that in feudal England the serfs were encouraged to dance on the village green while the feudal gentry looked on with a benevolent and protective smile. Plans to prevent people from becoming dangerously angry by giving them an occasional taste of French pastry and encouraging them to dance on the village green are very common. When moral indignation becomes a menace to the structure of traditional civilisation, the privileged classes become anxious to dispense justice, to ameliorate the condition of the people, to increase their wages. Their humanitarian and kindly feelings, their moral conscience, their devotion to the ideal of

justice become greatly intensified. But unfortunately their exalted intentions and their high ethical principles are stultified by their lack of grasp of the situation. Only discontented, angry, envious people with their hearts full of bitterness and hatred are qualified to appreciate that situation adequately, to feel the full force of moral principles, the grandeur of the ideal of justice, the sublimity of ethical laws, and to give practical effect to those high sentiments. They alone are able to appreciate the fact that the structure of traditional civilisation cannot be effectively ameliorated by means of French pastry and folk-dances, but only by destroying it. And whatever plans leisurely and privileged persons may have in desperate situations, they are anxious above all things that the structure of traditional civilisation shall not be destroyed. They are anxious to save traditional civilisation. So that between their enthusiasm for justice and ethical ideals and that of rude, angry, and discontented persons who do not belong to the leisured and privileged classes there is an irreconcilable difference.

The ethical question of justice is at the  
GB



present time bound up with what is sometimes called the class-war between the people who profit by existing economic arrangements and the workers or workless proletarians. The profiteers are much nicer people than the proletarians. As a rule the proletarians are not very nice people. Their culture leaves much to be desired. They are not the sort of people whom one is disposed to invite to dinner. It would seem accordingly natural that people of culture and intelligence should be much more closely drawn toward the profiteers than toward the proletarians. That is precisely where the moral law, the supremacy of ethics comes in. The slaves, the bottom dogs, the lowest of the low are invariably in the right. Since the sublime moral and ethical values are nothing but the values arising out of social relations between those who suffer from injustice and those who profit by it, the sufferers from injustice are the only legitimate representatives and mouthpieces of those sublime moral and ethical values. Their envy, their mean passions, their malice, their bitter and biased hatred are the direct source and expression of the "categorical imperative" of morality. Intelligent

and thoughtful people are, in the present confused condition of traditional civilisation, generally poor, subject to extreme injustice and often to persecution. Many of them have, no doubt, quite unworthy personal reasons for being bitterly indignant. That is a great help to them. They are all the better qualified to grasp the situation more accurately than Queen Marie Antoinette or Mr. Henry Ford. But even when people of free intelligence happen not to be poor, and derive a considerable amount of well-being from the conditions of civilisation, they may occasionally, if they are sufficiently intelligent to overcome their handicap, side with the mean, envious, and often unintelligent proletarians. They will do so not because they are attracted toward the poor—as a rule they hate the sight of them—but because they are attracted toward moral good and indignant against moral evil.

Those differences of opinion on the subject of ethics and justice, although they may be very interesting themes for philosophical debates, possess an ever more vital and exciting interest. They are one of the causes, and not the least important, of the decline and fall of

traditional civilisations. These do not primarily rest on force, but on the loyal acceptance of the traditional ideas which go with them. Such is the importance of those ideas that the civilisation founded upon them succeeds for a time in commanding the loyal devotion of the people and that its structure causes no moral indignation. The ancient civilisations founded in the near East by priests succeeded in persuading the people so thoroughly that those civilisations were the expression of a divinely appointed order of the universe, that although the people suffered terrible hardships they never thought of being morally indignant about it. To be morally indignant about the divinely appointed order of the universe would have been absurd. Similarly the citizens of the great Roman Empire, the first European civilisation, were for a long time persuaded that the privilege of being Roman citizens was the greatest that could be enjoyed, and even the Jew, Paul of Tarsus, when he declared that he was a Roman citizen, could not help feeling a certain sense of pride similar to that which a jobless American workman who is being bludgeoned by a policeman feels in remembering that he is

a free citizen of the United States. But the ideas which the Jew Paul was instrumental in spreading among the trades unions of the Roman Empire greatly helped to destroy that sense of loyalty to Roman civilisation, and to convert it into moral indignation. And it was that moral indignation, that is to say, the utter hatred of the whole thing, that inspired the Christian trade unionists, and made them loathe the great Roman Empire of which they were citizens and rejoice when the barbarians destroyed it.

Traditional civilisations are founded upon their capacity to inspire loyalty by means of beliefs, opinions, principles in keeping with themselves, that is to say, founded upon the authority of tradition. When those beliefs, opinions, principles no longer inspire loyalty, but inspire, on the contrary, moral indignation, and come to be irreverently regarded as sophistical untruths, the further continuance of traditional civilisation for an indefinite time becomes impossible.

Social arrangements which arouse moral indignation are called unjust. But social arrangements which are unjust are also foolish

and unwise. Civilisations which disintegrate because their social arrangements are unjust are not the victims of moral retribution, but of natural selection. They are not properly constructed, they are not adapted to the conditions which govern the existence of social structures, for the injustice of their social arrangements brings about their disintegration and destruction. Social injustice is fatal to the interests of a civilisation, not because it is morally bad, but because it is so injudicious as to be suicidal.

## CHAPTER VII

### IS THE DOOM SEALED?

EVER SINCE THE LAST WAR a good deal has been heard to the effect that the second European civilisation is going the way of the first and is now approaching final dissolution. There are many obvious grounds for the impression. Such has been the ruin wrought by the last war that it appears impossible that Western civilisation could survive another. Yet it appears equally impossible to prevent one. The economic structure of Western civilisation, which constituted the chief ground for confidence in its power and stability, now seems to be as clearly working out its destruction. Western nations relied for the security of their civilisation on the irresistible power of their armaments and of their economic resources. Those grounds for confidence and security have now become grounds for alarm and insecurity. The mental perplexity caused by the situation and the fact that people's minds are drawn in opposite directions, being afraid, on the one hand, to delude themselves dangerously and

on the other hand to face facts, has led to an unmistakable and rapid state of general mental decay and futility which bears every appearance of decrepitude and decadence. Moreover, Western traditional civilisation has actually come to an end completely in one-sixth part of the world and among one-tenth of the human race.

The impression created by those indications may, nevertheless, be mistaken. Several competent and thoughtful persons express the most pessimistic views. They declare that traditional civilisation might quite well endure for several centuries longer. Apart from such an appalling outlook seriously set forth by competent thinkers, there are many grounds for perplexity in the minds of modern men and women as to the fate of Western civilisation. There is an enormous amount of argument intended to show that it will save itself. Never was there such an argumentative age. Books, newspapers, magazines, speech-makers, and all the people who talk or write have so many opinions to set forth that the brains of modern people are in a whirl. The official opinion of those who conduct the affairs of Western traditional civilisation is that it is the only possible

civilisation and that it will therefore last as long as the human race. Demonstrations are forthcoming in abundance that "the Russian experiment" is merely an absurd tissue of ignorance, injustice, and errors, and that it cannot therefore possibly succeed—for, obviously, no absurd tissue of ignorance, injustice, and errors can possibly succeed. Demonstrations are forthcoming to show that wise governments and expert diplomats will see to it that civilisation shall not be destroyed by another war, or that at any rate the governments and the diplomats shall not be destroyed. Demonstrations are forthcoming which are supposed to make it clear that the present economic difficulties are a regrettable, but transient and incidental, dislocation resulting from the after-effects of the war and from causes which cannot be made quite clear except to experts in finance, but that the said experts will see to it that the matter of credits, gold reserves, exchanges, guarantees, depreciation of silver, and the whole hocus-pocus is properly adjusted, and mankind may be assured that prosperity is at the present moment just around the corner.

Such is the deluge of argument in support of



the cheerful outlook that Western traditional civilisation will last as long as the human race that it is difficult for inexperienced persons to cope with the argumentative flood. One cannot help feeling that diplomatic experts, accredited government officials, financial experts, cool-headed business men, journalists, must understand what they are talking about. One's natural modesty and diffidence, the consciousness of one's ignorance, one's amazement at the jargon, make it appear preposterous that one should set up his crude impressions against the considerate judgment of trained and accredited experts drawing large salaries. Those authorities demonstrate, moreover, that the people who believe that Western civilisation is lying on its death-bed are persons whose minds are biased by their not drawing large salaries, by moral indignation, and by hostility toward Western civilisation ; and that their belief is but the expression of their wish. People so biased are incapable of looking at the matter as judicially and impartially as do experts who draw large salaries. They are blinded by their bitterness, their hatred of Western civilisation, their malignant and disloyal passions.

All this may or may not be true. The most inexperienced person has ample opportunities of testing the degree of confidence which may be placed in the pleasantly varied judgments and prognostications of diplomatic and economic experts. They may be right as to the ignorance, the unbalanced judgment, the evil and disloyal passions, masquerading as moral indignation, of the people who express their repudiation and loathing of nationalistic, capitalistic, Christian civilisation. But there is one thing which, amid that abundance of demonstration, has not yet been demonstrated by the experts. They have not demonstrated that those malignant and disloyal people do not exist.

Whether the concrete economic aspects of the situation or its mental aspects be considered amounts to much the same thing. Whether a social structure becomes obsolete and unadapted to changed conditions, or whether people think that it has become so and cease to share its traditional ideas, comes in effect to the same situation. People may quite excusably become bewildered by the flood of argumentation about political and economic conditions. Those conditions have become enormously

complex. It is very difficult to be sure that all factors have been taken into account. But there is no question about the fact that the existing system of Western civilisation is giving rise to widespread and increasing dissatisfaction, disloyalty, and even detestation. And if we have understood rightly the manner in which traditional systems of civilisation ultimately decline and fall, that fact, which is not disputed or disputable, is in itself sufficient to make it clear that Western civilisation cannot continue to prosper as an object of general detestation.

Not to be inspired with patriotic enthusiasm for belligerent nationalism, with loyalty and devotion toward individualistic industrial capitalism, with reverence for antique religious institutions, with zeal for the suppression of unsuitable opinions may be wrong and perverse. But the fact is not altered that such deplorable wrong-headedness exists. That lack of enthusiasm for traditional nationalistic, capitalistic, Christian civilisation is to be found among a considerable and increasing number of persons. A large proportion of those persons are not remarkably intelligent or well-informed. They are no more intelligent than the

persons who wave flags and look with horror upon disloyal views. Disapproval of traditional civilisation is also prevalent among persons who regard themselves as above the general level of intelligence and information. Their views are shared by a large proportion of those who, rightly or wrongly, are accounted the most distinguished living thinkers. Some who have the highest reputation for philosophical comprehension have given it out as their considered opinion that if no hope is to be entertained of a radical transformation in the existing structure, it were desirable that the human race should be wiped off the face of the earth or that the planet should be destroyed by some merciful cataclysm, rather than civilisation should continue in its present state. Very few people, indeed, regard Western civilisation with feelings of devotion, loyalty, and enthusiasm. At most they regard it with indifference. To the great majority of intelligent people it is an object of horror. A social structure which is founded upon power to injure appears to them to be, by nature and disposition, the very incarnation of moral evil. It is looked upon with the loathing and disgust which evil

inspires. It is looked upon with moral indignation. Traditional civilisation is regarded as intolerable, insensate and criminal. Such is the detestation which it inspires that every other interest, sentiment, and ideal of life is blotted out in the bitterness of the indignation and detestation which Western civilisation arouses. The man or the woman who can look on with patience, with acquiescence, who can pursue pleasure, cultivate art or other interests, while murderous evil and iniquity endure is, in their opinion, deficient in intelligence, humanity, and moral sense.

Those views and sentiments of intelligent and unintelligent people may, I say, be extremely reprehensible. But the fact remains that they are keenly felt and widely prevalent. Efforts to silence them and check them tax to an increasing extent the resources of apologists. The political, economic, and philosophical experts who learnedly demonstrate that alarm concerning nationalistic wars and economic breakdowns are quite unfounded, may or may not know what they are talking about. But if they propose to suggest that a civilisation can continue to flourish despite the

disloyalty, hatred, and indignation which it inspires, we may with complete assurance know that they are talking unmitigated nonsense.

Properly speaking, every civilisation is a democracy. People have the government, the social organisation, the civilisation they deserve. The most despotic autocracies have existed only through the loyal acquiescence of the people. No government, no civilisation has ever existed, except quite transiently and temporarily, on any other basis. Opposition to it in the hearts and in the thoughts of the people may be kept down by force for a time. The revolt of the human mind may be put down once, twice, fifty times. But it cannot be put down for an indefinite time. The power, the civilisation which is no longer able to command loyalty, confidence, belief, devotion, but which instead excites anger, contempt, hatred, is doomed, no matter how many machine-guns and bombing-planes it may dispose of. Force is of no avail where loyalty is no longer possible.

The condition of things which now obtains in Western civilisation is closely similar to that which brought about the dissolution of the

first European civilisation. This took place primarily because the bulk of the people had ceased to experience any feelings of loyalty toward it, and had instead come to regard it with hostility or at any rate with indifference. They had come to regard the maintenance of Roman civilisation as none of their business. The common people had become used to the idea that the machine of civilisation was not run for their benefit, but only for that of a small privileged class. They hated it. And when Christian missionaries called that structure of government and civilisation "the Beast," and denounced it as an abomination, the people were glad to concur with the disloyal views, and became Christians. Plenty of official voices were raised to appeal to their patriotism, to the duty of being loyal to civilisation, to the ignorance and odiousness of Christian views. But the appeals left them indifferent. The state, the empire, the Beast could look after itself. For their part they felt no obligation toward it, and they rejoiced when it got into difficulties and finally collapsed.

It might be urged that the present disloyalty toward Western civilisation is the effect of

circumstances incidental upon the dislocation produced by the war, and that a gradual recovery from that dislocation and a return of economic prosperity would dispel much of the prevailing discontent and obliterate the disloyal hatred with which the system of Western civilisation is now regarded. That is a very superficial view. A traditional civilisation rests not on feelings of loyalty alone, but on the ideas and opinions which foster that loyalty. Belief in those ideas and opinions is so essential a part of a traditional civilisation that more efforts are expended in fostering those beliefs than on almost any other aspect of a civilised system. Feelings of disloyalty and hostility toward Western civilisation are not solely the effect of economic suffering. Or, if you will, that economic suffering has not merely given rise to resentment and animosity, it has also led to traditional ideas and beliefs being regarded and scrutinised with less illusion, with more ruthless criticism and realism. It has destroyed not only the loyalties which are indispensable to the operation of a civilised system, but also the assumptions, the ideas, the beliefs, which promoted that loyalty.



Illusory beliefs, once they have been destroyed, are of all elements of the human world the most difficult to revive. It is almost impossible, in fact, to restore a belief that has once been exploded, when the idea which was firmly held has been perceived to be a lie. Allegiance may be transferred and restored, economic conditions may be manipulated so as to galvanise them for a time into a semblance of solvency, but the idea that has once been recognised as an illusion and a lie can never again become a truth and a living force.

And it is not the economic structure of Western civilisation alone which has become dislocated, it is not its political structure, it is not the sentiments of confidence, of respect, of loyalty, with which it was regarded that have wilted. It is the entire mental fabric, it is its authority, the authority upon which the whole edifice of Western civilisation rested. That has collapsed—completely, for ever. The bottom has fallen out of the structure, not in the political combinations that are discussed at Geneva or elsewhere, not in the economic system, not in Wall Street or Throgmorton Street, but in the minds of men and women.

Their minds are changed. The change shows in every working of their thoughts. Vaguely, confusedly, partially, inconsistently, maybe, in the minds of many, yet as an irresistible tendency which can no more be eluded than the law of gravitation. Multifarious as are the aspects of that tendency, of that mental change, it reduces itself, in final analysis, to one fact : the collapse of the authority of tradition.

It is very difficult for succeeding generations to estimate the mental changes which have taken place in the course of their growth. At the end of the nineteenth century the authority of tradition was very generally accepted. If it was asked why wars were still permitted, the question was regarded as foolish, and was considered to be adequately answered by saying that wars had always taken place, and must therefore always take place. To discuss the problem of poverty seemed to most people equally foolish. Mankind had always, it was confidently asserted, been divided into rich and poor, and therefore the poor would be always with us. Criticisms of private enterprise and private ownership of land and food were not taken very seriously. It was scarcely

worth while discussing the matter ; it had always been so, it was asserted, and the authority of tradition was, after all, the most conclusive argument. So with the organisation of the family, with marriage, with morals. Even to-day, when it is found necessary to give more effective refutations of criticisms directed against those institutions, no reply can be discovered except by direct or indirect appeal to the authority of tradition. In the same period, within living memory, the possibility of flying was much discussed. But the general impression was that men would never fly, and the ground for that opinion was that they had never flown.

The whole structure of Western civilisation was thought of as resting on a secure foundation because it had always rested on that foundation. It was taken for granted that tradition represented the accumulated experience and wisdom of the race. The structure, though it might have faults, was regarded as the best form of social organisation that was possible, because it was the product of the past, because it was founded on principles which had, more or less, always obtained (a

science of social anthropology was created to prove this view and to explain away the facts which disproved it). It was therefore the only possible structure in harmony with human nature. The accumulated experience and wisdom of the race throughout the ages were, it was thought obvious, a far better practical guide than any rash ideas or plans that could be devised on the spur of the moment. Those who put forward such rash ideas and plans, those who were discontented with the structure of Western society, were foolhardy and foolish persons, because they could not possibly be wiser than the accumulated experience and wisdom of past ages. Any new ideas put forward by modern thought could not possibly possess a greater validity and wisdom than the authority of tradition.

Those views are no longer taken for granted as readily as they were during the last years of the nineteenth century or the first years of the twentieth. They are, of course, still fairly widespread, and may be found in current literature. But even in those quarters where they are still regarded as valid, they are not put forward with the same confidence, and it

is sometimes thought necessary to supplement them by reasons and arguments.

The majority of intelligent people, or, shall we say, of people who feel cause to distrust the authority of tradition, are not prepared to assent to the structure of Western civilisation merely because it is sanctioned by that authority. They ask not whether it is the result of the accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind, but whether it is the best that mankind can do with its present accumulated experience and wisdom. That is a devastating question. For it is quite evident that if the accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind were to-day applied honestly and earnestly to organising a social structure sincerely intended to secure the greatest harmony, well-being, and happiness of the human race, it would certainly not produce the structure which exists to-day, and which is represented as being the fruit of the accumulated wisdom and experience of past ages. The result would be totally different. The accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind would not provide for the organisation of sovereign states living in fear and ready at any moment to fly

at one another's throats. It would not arrange matters in such a manner that an over-abundance of wheat would compel people to go without bread. It would not found a social structure on the principle that private power may be used to produce public injury.

The fundamental theory on which Western civilisation rested, namely, that it was the result of the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind and therefore the best possible in the circumstances was a fiction. Intelligent men and women to-day are scarcely able to give credence to the fact that people once believed such a myth. However ignorant they may be, they know that societies, governments, civilisations were set up by people who were urged by greed, just as the people who refused to sell bread because they have too much of it and could not make a profit are inspired by greed, and not by the accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind. Intelligent people know that when Western civilisation is said to be the fruit of the accumulated experience and wisdom of mankind, this should be understood to mean that it is the accumulated result of the greed, the savagery,

the ignorance, the unscrupulousness, and the barbarism of mankind in its ruder phases.

When, therefore, political experts assure us that the dangers of barbaric nationalism are being insured against by signing agreements when economic experts inform us that prosperity is round the corner or that there are signs intelligible only to themselves that the present crisis in Western civilisation will terminate about the month of October 1932, we may be excused for viewing those expert opinions with scant confidence or reverence. A civilisation does not go on indefinitely when it is resented, detested and despised. The animosity felt towards it by those upon whose loyalty it depends cannot be soothed away when once they have detected the fact that the civilisation and the soothing theories which are put forth to maintain it rest upon lies.

Western civilisation is to-day undergoing the inevitable fate which has befallen all traditional civilisations when the fictions upon which their power rested have come to be recognised, and when the desperate efforts of rulers to save their civilisation have induced them to become ever more mendacious, dishonest, and unjust.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHY IS TRADITIONAL CIVILISATION UNPOPULAR?

THE PROFOUND mental change which has been taking place since the earlier periods of Western civilisation is proceeding toward its logical conclusion. So gradual, so natural, has been the change that it has come almost unnoticed. It does not figure in current cultural history among the great revolutions of thought. Yet it is the most momentous that the human mind has undergone in its relation to social development.

During the Christian Middle Ages there existed much greater suffering and hardship than at the present time. The effects of the lack of organisation in the social structure, of its injustice, of mental and material tyranny, were much more pronounced and more horrible. People suffered, people moaned. Thoughtful persons viewed the world with despair. But they held for the most part that the suffering and the misery were inevitable. That view is the



very essence of the Christian doctrine. Life was a trial and a probation. The world was a vale of tears. Man was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. The hardship, the suffering were part of the established order of the universe. The injustice of the social structure was but an aspect of that appointed order. People railed against the cruelty of life. They cursed against the day they were born. But it scarcely occurred to them to ascribe that suffering to any other cause than the nature of life itself, the appointed order of the universe. They were encouraged in the view that the only means of meeting the situation was to exercise greater patience and resignation. It was, in fact, the express function of religion, the invaluable function which made it the most priceless and indispensable element of civilisation, to aid that resignation, to assist men and women in bearing the inevitable burden of life. Religion was the paraclete, the comforter, the most invaluable possession of man. Hence people asked, "How could there be a world without religion?" When, amid the trials, hardships, and monstrous injustice of life, rulers took some step to alleviate suffering, built a church to afford consolation to the people,

distributed alms, sent holy men to exhort the wretches whom they had condemned to misery, the people were moved to tears at the goodness, the humanity, the generosity of their rulers. No one was, of course, to blame for the established order of the universe, for the essential cruelty of life. Blessed were the meek and patient and those who assisted their weaker brothers to bear the burden.

The change which has taken place in the collective mind of Western civilisation has been, in substance, the exculpation of God. The chief function of that personage was that of a scapegoat. He bore the blame for what was accounted the order of the universe, for the suffering, the injustice caused by the barbarous social structure. The modern mind has gradually come to perceive that God was maligned by the Christian religion. People no longer believe in a creator of hell or of traditional civilisation.

The change has not taken place suddenly and completely. The acquittal of God has not resulted in the immediate apprehension of the true perpetrator of social suffering and injustice. It is still widely held that they are inevitable, that they are, in a sense, part of the

established order of the universe. While they are no longer generally regarded as the work of a divinity, they are set down to irremediable factors in the nature of life and of human society. They are due, it is supposed, in great part to human nature. Men are naturally selfish, greedy, unscrupulous. They are naturally foolish, full of prejudice, incapable of the most obvious reasonable attitude or action. The structure of society is deplorable, but it is the only structure which is possible, human nature being what it is. Wisdom consists in making the best of things, in adapting oneself to inevitable circumstances. Whole philosophies, whole sciences have been fashioned with a view to elucidating that attitude. The most influential thinkers have evolved a philosophy of pragmatism, of adaptation to existing conditions, of opportunism. Biology is understood to teach that all life is a cruel and ruthless struggle and competition, the fact being overlooked that there is not the slightest resemblance between wild life and predatory civilisation. Social anthropology has been represented as teaching that the existing structure of society has, in all essential respects, always existed, that it is

founded upon ineradicable instincts of human nature. A science of economics has been constructed with a view to proving that the existing economic structure is the result of unalterable economic laws, of economic facts, as they are pleasantly termed. In rebelling against those facts and those laws, men are foolishly striking their heads against stone walls. Wisdom consists in accepting the universe, as interpreted by the academic institutions of traditional civilisation, and in the exercise of patience, contentment, and resignation. Thus is effected the famous reconciliation between science and the Christian religion. The science of traditional civilisation has shown itself well qualified to take up the function of religion, to supply the same acquiescence in the established structure of traditional civilisation, the same wise acceptance of it that was in the Middle Ages so effectively brought about by the Christian religion.

But that rationalising, if it may be so called, of an attitude which formerly rested upon the overt authority of tradition, that modernising of the defences which serve to divert the responsibility for hardships and suffering

from the real criminal are becoming ineffective. They are falling away to an increasing degree from the modern mind, and are losing their significance in the same manner as the authority upon which Christian civilisation originally rested. The responsibility is at last coming to be laid at the right door. The hardship and suffering, it is coming to be perceived, is not the work of a heavenly criminal. It is not the inevitable result of human nature, of universal laws, of unchanging social relations, of unalterable facts. It is the logical and inevitable consequence of the fact that human society is the product of savage and barbaric tradition, and has never been organised.

Hence moral indignation is in many quarters no longer directed against God, against the nature of life, against the constitution of the universe, against an unalterable fate. It is directed against the traditional civilisation. And that is not regarded as having been divinely instituted, as part of the order of the universe, as an unalterable fact. It is, on the contrary, regarded as an impracticable blunder.

When dissatisfaction or disapproval is expressed concerning its structure it is generally

assumed that the critic has in his pocket some cut-and-dried plan for the organisation of human affairs in some other fashion. He is asked whether he is a socialist, a communist, an anarchist, or what-not. His dissatisfaction and disapproval, it is assumed, must arise from a predilection for some particular scheme of social organisation which, since it has never anywhere existed, may properly be called a Utopia.

It would, of course, be very desirable that when traditional Western civilisation crumbles into final dissolution, as before long it inevitably must, a plan of social organisation should be available which might immediately be put into operation in its place. That would be extremely convenient, though it is extremely unlikely. A plan of organisation that has never been tried before must necessarily be provisional and subject to modifications in accordance with the results of experience. Any attempt to organise human life on principles of reason and justice must necessarily be an experiment, for it has never before been tried. But that is no reason whatever why human life should continue to be disorganised on principles of insanity and injustice.

Such plans have nothing whatever to do, as is persistently assumed, with the dissatisfaction or disapproval which are felt concerning the structure of traditional Western civilisation. The assumption rests upon a misunderstanding. It is assumed that traditional Western civilisation is a system or plan of social organisation. It is assumed that any criticism of it must have in view the substitution of some other system for the existing social organisation. The assumption is erroneous, illogical, and misleading. Traditional civilisation is not a system of social organisation. No one can therefore have in view the substitution of a new system of organisation for one that does not exist.

Suppose that the country were infested with bandits, as was southern Italy, or northern Greece, or Mexico not very long since, so that travellers or promenaders taking the air ran the risk of being robbed or held to ransom. Would a person who expressed dissatisfaction at that state of things be asked what form of organisation be proposed to put in the place of the existing state of brigandage? The question would sound foolish. Complaints concerning a state of brigandage have no reference to the

social theories of the persons who dislike being robbed and held to ransom.

The illustration is inadequate. Under the existing conditions of Western civilisation not travellers and wayfarers only, but every man, woman and child is held to ransom every minute of his or her life, and is robbed whenever he or she enters a shop, buys food, clothing, or any other goods, hires a roof under which to sleep, or endeavours to provide for any of the needs of existence. The necessities of life are not produced or provided in order to supply the needs of people, but in order to supply profits and dividends, so that the various persons to whom it is necessary to apply in order to obtain the necessities of life are not concerned with providing them, but with obtaining from those who need them the largest possible profits and dividends. By far the larger proportion of the money which is paid for any necessity does not represent the value of the article, but the profit of those who own and sell it. The profits which constitute the basis of Western civilisation do not come out of the air. They are not created. They are forcibly abstracted from social wealth. If people cannot pay the money



to furnish those profits, they can starve, and it is nobody's business to rescue them. In other words, their lives are held to ransom. They have not even the recourse of appealing, as the traveller held up by bandits might, to the government or the police for protection, for the bandits are so powerful that the police and the government are in their pay.

Western civilisation does not, in fact, possess any means of livelihood. It has no land from which to draw raw materials or on which to build houses, it is entirely destitute of food. Those things do not belong to Western civilisation, but to private individuals who may sell them or hire them out or let them go to waste, or make a bonfire of them, as suits their interests. It is their property and they can do with it as they please. If the ransom is not paid, people can starve.

That state of affairs is only one item in the system of Western civilisation. As a matter of fact, people can only give one small fraction of their work to pay the ransom demanded by the owners of the necessities of life. The largest portion of their work is given to governments who are obliged to fight against other

governments in order to exist at all. That fighting is the most expensive item in the budget of Western civilisation. About four-fifths of the work which people have to do does not go towards paying their ransom, but towards fighting other governments.

If one were to describe such a state of affairs in terms of ethical values, one could only correctly describe it as criminal. Evil and crime mean the misuse of power to inflict injury. Western civilisation is founded upon the misuse of power for the purpose of inflicting injury. To hold the indispensable necessities of life and to refuse them to people unless, in addition to their value, ransoms so exorbitant are paid that they amount to fortunes which no man can possibly contrive to spend is a crime which is not to be matched in the annals of criminal courts. Western civilisation is, speaking soberly in descriptive ethical terms, that is to say, in social terms, the most criminal organisation known. That the various adjustments required in order to conduct it demand the occasional slaughter of some millions of human beings, as it did a few years ago, is a comparatively minor

and incidental item in its criminal record.

That criminal organisation not only requires to be defended and maintained by high explosives, machine guns, and other paraphernalia necessary to carrying out the avocation of bandits, it not only involves the occasional slaughter of a few millions of people, but it also requires as an indispensable condition of its existence the strictest control over their thoughts. The vital interests of that criminal organisation demand that it shall be represented as good and virtuous, just and wise, as, in fact, a most venerable and excellent thing inspired by sublime ideals. It calls itself Christian, which term is intended to be understood in the sense that the said criminal organisation is founded on sentiments of charity and of love for humanity. A large proportion of the wealth criminally and brutally stolen from people is devoted to the construction and maintenance of churches whose function it is to expound the highly virtuous character of the criminal organisation and to combat any disposition on the part of people to think of it otherwise. The task, in the carrying out of which all the resources

of the criminal organisation are enlisted, is extremely difficult. In the seats of higher learning, or Universities, a constant watch has to be kept on the teachers. They are, of course, selected among those most distinguished for their learning and intelligence. But should any teacher in a University actually think honestly and say what he honestly thinks, he is in danger of being dismissed and disgraced. That violence done to the minds of people is even more deplorable than the state of brigandage by which people are held to ransom or the arrangement by which they have to give four-fifths of their work in order to provide for the murder of other people and the destruction of their homes.

I have not been attempting a criticism of Western civilisation. It would take too long. All that I wish to point out is the profound misunderstanding which commonly leads people to ask anyone who criticises Western civilisation whether he is a socialist, or a communist, or what scheme of organisation he advocates for human society. The question assumes that Western civilisation is a social organisation and that those who criticise

it or are dissatisfied with it propose to substitute for that organisation another one.

Western civilisation is not an organisation of human society. It is scarcely accurate even to speak of it as a society. That manner of speaking derives from the myth that civilisation resulted originally from the efforts of wise people who set themselves to organise a society in the best possible manner they could think of, and that they obtained the general consent and agreement of those concerned in the arrangement. It is part of the myth that the criminal organisation is a virtuous and excellent thing. Human society has never been organised in this or any other manner. When I say that Western civilisation cannot be called an organisation I am not using exaggerated language, for it is obvious that something that has never been organised cannot properly be said to be organised. When I compared the owners of the necessities of life to bandits, holding people to ransom, I was not indulging in an unflattering comparison. That is exactly the way in which the ownership of the necessities of life was in the beginning established, and the original

owners would not have been greatly offended by the comparison. In fact they quite openly admitted its accuracy. When an enquiry was set up in France as to the origin of certain dues claimed by owners of land for use of the land, the claimants candidly and without any shame admitted that dues were originally collected by forcibly seizing people and stripping them. That, the noblemen explained, was the origin of their revenues.

It may be objected : " That may have been the state of things in the dark Middle Ages, but a great deal has happened since then. We seem to have heard that there have been glorious revolutions, constituent assemblies, democratic constitutions, proclamations of government of the people, for the people, by the people."

That is true. But, as already noted, the new, reformed, reconstituted states of Western civilisation have never set about reorganising anything except the merest superficial details of the system. They have always been satisfied to take over the essential structure of civilisation from the dark Middle Ages or any other age, as they found it. The essential structure was so definitely established in tradition that

it scarcely occurred to anyone even to question it. So that changes brought about by modern revolutions and constitutions have really been much more superficial than is generally supposed. They have changed many things, but they have left what is really important in the traditional structure essentially unchanged. And it thus appears that the more traditional civilisation changes, the more it remains the same. The Constitution of the United States, for example, was drafted by very intelligent and public-spirited men, animated by the most exalted intentions. But it was not an organisation of a human society which was undertaken. It took over bodily the political and economic structure handed down by tradition, merely making some small superficial changes of procedure and nomenclature which left that traditional criminal structure untouched.<sup>1</sup> Thus it comes about that the great American republic remains an independent sovereign state engaged in fighting, whether in war or in peace, all other sovereign states, that an enormous

<sup>1</sup> As is now well known from the researches of J. Allen Smith and Charles Beard, "the Fathers of the Republic who wrote our Constitution not only did not, but did not want to establish democratic government."

proportion of the labour of its free citizens is devoted to providing for that fighting, that its captains of industry and millionaire owners are the direct successors of the robber barons of the Middle Ages, but enormously more predatory, that professors in American Universities who speak unfavourably of that splendid Constitution are to-day being dismissed, that the essential structure of the great American republic is exactly shaped by the tradition of barbarian European states in the Middle Ages, and that the unparalleled resources, natural wealth and power of the United States only render that structure a thousand times more revolting than the traditional models from which it derives.

The cause of the suffering, the injustice, the tyranny, the folly, the criminality which excite a growing measure of moral indignation is not a god, is not the order of the universe, is not human nature. It is the traditional, that is to say, unorganised, irrational, and immoral character of Christian, nationalistic, capitalistic civilisation.

The cruelty, the injustice and the folly which excite indignation are not the fault of any particular individuals. The man who accumulates enormous power and wealth by plundering



the resources of mankind and preventing people from obtaining the means of livelihood is not a particularly cruel or unjust person. He is no more so than most human beings would be in his place. He is probably a man of ordinary tender affections. He may even have a distinct disposition toward high humanitarian ideals and may think a good deal about the love of mankind. Although many of his most bitter denouncers are inspired by envy, and would probably act in exactly the same way as he does, were they in his position, his objectionable social behaviour is not the effect of human nature. It is the result of the situation in which the individual finds himself placed in an unorganised society. Every individual is compelled to adapt his social behaviour to that situation. On the battlefield men who are engaged in murdering are not murderers. A man encounters another whom, were he to meet him at dinner, he would probably deem an excellent fellow, and proceeds to shoot him. He is compelled to do so because, unless he did, he would be shot by the other man. That situation is so horrible, so repugnant to human nature,

that those of us who have been placed in it are kept awake at night. But every man is, in truth, placed in that situation every day and every moment of his life. He is compelled to rob or to be robbed, to inflict injury or to endure it, to cause misery or to suffer it. He is compelled to be hard when he would rather be tender, to be cruel when he would rather be kind and generous, to outwit when he would prefer to help and to comfort, to regard every man as his foe when he would sooner regard him as a friend. He is compelled to defend himself against civilisation, to fight instead of assisting, to strive against his fellows instead of striving for them. He is compelled to be vile instead of being human, because "business is business." In war a man can refuse to fight. In traditional civilisation he has not even that alternative. He cannot be a conscientious objector unless he is prepared to lay down his life and that of his family. He is compelled to sell his soul. He is compelled to eat bread while others are starving. He knows that every joy and every indulgence he allows himself cost misery and degradation to some human being. He is compelled to be a party to

depredation, to iniquity, cruelty, and injustice. And he is asked and expected to regard the system which requires of him those things as something sacred, claiming his loyalty and devotion, something to be defended and promoted. If he is not blinded by the inconceivable insolence of those claims, he knows that the thing which mendaciously puts them forth, the unorganised traditional savage horror which blandly terms itself civilisation, is an unspeakably hideous and criminal atrocity.

The human race is no longer so blind to traditional mendacities as it formerly was. It is being forced by the increasing pressure of the logic of facts to become more intelligent. For the most part it is no longer able to countenance the crime of war. It can no longer accept unquestioningly the sacred claims to loyalty which were put forward but a few years ago with reference to the duty of murder. It is becoming increasingly difficult for it to accept the same claims put forward with reference to the anti-social structure of civilisation. Mankind is becoming unable to countenance the crime of predatory individualistic society.

## CHAPTER IX

# THE CHAOS OF THOUGHT

THE ECONOMIC consequences of an anti-social structure of Western civilisation are to many the clearest sign that it is breaking down. No other writing on the wall, however plainly legible to those who apprehend the laws that doom all traditional civilisations to self-destruction, could convey the warning in so definite a manner as the menace of economic bankruptcy.

It is to that logic of the economic argument that the Marxists refer when they say that economic conditions determine the course of social happenings. The keen interest felt by power-holding classes in the safeguarding of the authority of traditional ideologies rests ultimately upon economic motives. The moral indignation which fires those who do not benefit by that privileged power is likewise inspired by their unsatisfactory economic situation. Any change which may be thought desirable to safeguard civilisation is similarly imposed by the pressure of economic circumstances.

But economic conditions can give rise to social happenings only by acting upon minds. There could be no economic facts were there no psychological facts. The "materialism" of the Marxist doctrine is only apparent.

What it amounts to is that the psychological agencies which give rise to social happenings are of one kind only, namely interests, and that those interests are ultimately economic interests.

All human works and deeds are the externalised reactions of human minds. The economic structure rests upon a mental structure. The domination of holders of power over servile masses has been imposed and maintained through the latter's loyalty. That loyalty has, in turn, been fashioned by means of mythopœic fictions and by the disabling of intelligence. The more primitively naïve forms of that loyalty which supplied the foundations of antique theocratic civilisations were uncontested and undoubting. They made absolute power possible. The solidity of that foundation inevitably gave place to a less stable equilibrium. To disable human intelligence completely and permanently has been found impossible. It revolted ; and the history of Western civilisation is

not only a record of conflicts between rival claimants to power, but likewise of revolts of intelligence against the foundations of that power.

The outcome of that conflict between the irrepressible functions of intelligence which insisted on adapting itself to the facts of experience and the traditional fictions necessary to the maintenance of anti-social power has been a compromise so strange and incongruous that it has, in some respects, crippled the human mind more effectively than did the primitive imbecility of ancient uncontesting loyalties.

So violent grew the conflict between opinions that sought the support of argument and experience and opinions founded on the authority of ancient tradition that it became a matter of social necessity to devise some formula of accommodation between irreconcilable opposites. The social urgency which led to the expedient took, in fact, the very concrete form of dissatisfaction arising from the practice of suppressing opinions unfavourable to established power by burning, massacring, or casting into prison those who held them. The method of argument, which is, of course, still practised to a considerable extent, was until comparatively recently

employed on a much larger scale than is customary at the present day in democratic countries like the United States of America. A little over a hundred years ago, for example, the English prisons were full of gentlemen professing liberal opinions which would be accounted reactionary by enlightened modern liberals. In the course of the last few centuries those who pretended to found their opinions on valid grounds have become so moved with moral indignation that the authority of opinions founded on no grounds at all became seriously threatened. The moral indignation of the people who were in danger of being burned alive or imprisoned led them to put forward the bold demand that opinions founded on valid grounds should be "tolerated." Daring as it was, that demand was, owing to the dwindling authority of opinions founded on no grounds at all, eventually conceded. Valid and reasonable opinions became nominally tolerated, that is to say, the right to burn alive those who held them was formally waived. It was agreed that reasonable and intelligent opinions should enjoy a degree of consideration nominally equal to that enjoyed by groundless, unreasonable, and lunatic opinions.

Thus did the noble principle of freedom of opinion become established as one of the foundations of the charter of democratic liberty. By an astounding legal fiction sane and insane opinions, groundless and valid opinions were, it came to be held, equal in the eyes of impartial and judicial judgment.

The famous formula of compromise was, as is well known, by no means strictly observed, for opinions resting on valid grounds have never enjoyed, and can never in a traditional civilisation enjoy, the same status and the same degree of consideration as opinions founded on no grounds at all. But the formula has had the pleasant result of enabling groundless traditional opinions to appeal to the noble principle of democratic liberty when endangered by intelligence. Whenever those who formerly burned people alive, and who now bring them to trial before a jury, for using their intelligence reasonably consider that they are incommoded in the propagation and inculcation of groundless opinions, they become fired with moral indignation at the scandalous violation of the noble principle of democratic freedom.

The net effect of that noble principle on  
KB



human intelligence is to obliterate the criteria between valid and groundless opinions, between sane and insane thought. All opinions being equally entitled to respect and consideration, equally free to be inculcated and propagated, every invidious, prejudiced, and intolerant discrimination between opinions resting on valid grounds and opinions resting on none is to the judicially impartial and dispassionate mind inadmissible.

The effects of that obliteration of the mind's criteria, that castration of intelligence, have been far more insidious and damaging than the mere tyranny of mythopœic tradition. The issue between the latter and the natural functions of intelligence was at least clear-cut. The modern mind, trained and inured to respect all opinions, to set aside the narrow, prejudiced and intolerant criteria of validity, has come to lose the ability to judge and discriminate. It has learned to combine in varying proportions traditional fictitious values inculcated from the cradle with valid grounds of judgment, so that it is enabled to bring forth all manner of hybrid monsters, such as reasonable patriotism, broadminded superstition,

conservative liberalism, moral and humanitarian predatory individualism. The modern mind has become adapted to a social configuration in which opinions are but the defensive and offensive weapons of contending social interests. It has become inured to regarding every opinion as personal, as a matter of individual democratic right, entitled by virtue of noble principles to be "respected," treated with consideration, with academic decorum and amiability, to be not too violently refuted, exposed or unceremoniously exploded by pressing too closely, without a show of generous qualification, any logical advantage. For are not all opinions, and more particularly groundless and insane opinions, "respectable"? The foundations and criteria of legitimate judgment and valid opinion have thus come to be distrusted and despised. Current philosophy and psychology have fallen into line with the democratic obliteration of the criteria. They have become "pragmatic." They have become as contemptuous of the normal functions of intelligence as of any myth of authoritarian tradition. They have come to regard opinions as the mere expression of interests

and passions. Modern psychology has learned to regard the diseased, infirm, emasculated, sabotaged condition to which the human mind has been reduced by the chaos of social conditions as its normal state and as representing the natural biological condition of the species.

One not infrequently hears expressions of gratitude in regard to the benefits derived from the study of some logical discipline, scholastic logic, or mathematics, or the law of evidence. The beneficiary confesses that he has entirely forgotten the tedious and pedantic details of those disciplines, but he has acquired, as he supposes, an invaluable faculty for distinguishing valid from invalid opinions, fallacy and sophistry from legitimate thought, judgments resting upon the natural grounds of judgment and judgments resting on no grounds. He ascribes that precious acquisition to the training imparted by the logical disciplines set forth by pedants. In reality what the training has effected has been merely to restore more or less the normal operation of his mental faculties as they have been developed by biological evolution. The clumsy and cumbersome pedantries of formal logic have not

created those faculties. The effect of the discipline has been merely that of an antidote which has more or less neutralised the poison which paralysed them. It has clarified to some extent the fog artificially created by the obliteration of criteria. That artificial mutilation of the mind has been brought about by social agencies in the interest of the traditional social structure.

The intellectual chaos which the Western world presents at this hour is the result. That chaos bears a close resemblance to that which marked the disintegration of the first Western civilisation. Mankind is, it is true, infinitely richer in the data and materials of thought, it enjoys an incomparably greater opportunity to be intelligent. Yet it finds itself to-day in a state of mental disintegration. Views and opinions are for the most part personal views and opinions. Scarcely anywhere does harmonious agreement exist. Even in the most objective and highly organised sciences seemingly irreconcilable controversies rage. Opposite views and interpretations are bandied backwards and forwards. Every view and every thought is liable to radical misunderstanding and misreading. The Babel is

not the sharp conflict between a tradition and its critics. In the present world's complexity the proportions and degrees in which the norms and standards of tradition are, consciously and unconsciously, used and rejected are so numerous and so varied that the combinations and permutations amount almost to as many personal judgments as there are individuals. The distrust of authority is so great that every mind, however incompetent, does not hesitate to set itself up against any other. The decay of respect for human intelligence is complete.

That intellectual chaos is the consequence of the lack of recognised standards and criteria of validity. That there are such standards cannot be disputed, else all thought would be equally futile. It could have accomplished nothing. To indulge in it would be meaningless. Yet since the human species emerged out of animality by virtue of the validity of its intelligence, that intelligence has been multiplied and its achievements have filled the earth. Nevertheless, the validity of that power has been persistently subjected to criticism. This is well, in so far as it has helped to sharpen the instrument by which alone man can

cope with the conditions of life. But that has not been the usual purpose of criticism. The purpose has been to defend invalid thought. The uncertainties of thought, the fallibility of reason, as it is called, have thus been constantly dwelt upon, not in order to overcome those difficulties and deficiencies, but in order to put forward other than valid and reasonable grounds for opinion. Such substitutes have been termed intuition, direct knowledge, the reasons of the heart that the mind knows not of, they have been termed inborn instincts. There used not very long ago to be a patriotic instinct, a moral instinct, a religious instinct, an instinct of property, an instinct of law and order, and even a monogamic instinct. The pains taken to demonstrate (by means of reason) the fallibility of reason, the deceptiveness of experience, the vanity of the intellect, have not been intended to produce greater caution and shrewdness, but to combat the natural enemy which has menaced the authority of groundless traditional opinions upon which the very structure and bank-account of civilisation are ultimately founded.

The democratic liberal compromise which

resulted from that conflict has even more successfully reduced intelligence to impotence. The anarchy of the modern mind is the logical effect of the logically indefensible doctrine of toleration and freedom of opinion which was the subterfuge by which valid thought escaped being forcibly suppressed by authoritarian tradition. Such a subterfuge is, of course, like all liberal compromises, not a remedy. The only remedy would be the quite illiberal, intolerant, and wholly undemocratic forcible suppression of convicted lies. The expedient substituted for that remedy, the only compromise consistent with the preservation of the traditional structure of civilisation, has, like all illogical expedients, had the result of intensifying the damage. It has crippled the human mind more effectively and hopelessly. The mental anarchy has, of necessity, increased with the complexity and with the desperate urgency of the issues at stake and with the increasing strain of their inconsistency. The human mind is becoming less and less capable of sanity and realism in proportion as those qualities are more urgently called for to extricate it from the morass in which it is ever more deeply floundering.

## CHAPTER X

# ARTIFICIAL STUPEFACTION

THE EXTENT to which the human mind is the direct product of the social structure, of civilisation, is realised perhaps by half a dozen thinkers. The whole mythology of civilisation requires that opinions, ideas, and beliefs should be thought of as the spontaneous and independent products of self-determined individual minds. What, were it not so, would become of the authority of traditional, of the eternal values graven in the human conscience, of the universal consensus of mankind, of the supremacy of democratic majorities?

In point of fact the minds of human beings are manufactured for them in the social factory. Children who are born deaf and who have not been educated by artificial devices, grow up totally unlike members of traditional civilisation. They are even quite unlike human beings. They cannot speak, they have no sense of propriety, they have no morals, no religion, no patriotism, no ordinary affections. Their



minds and their behaviour are those of animals. The instance of Helen Keller, who was born deaf and became also blind at the age of eighteen months is well known. She has written books which contain, besides the interesting account of her experiences and education, the amiable sentiments of a gentle New England lady. Before being laboriously educated she was a wild animal with fierce ungovernable temper, greedy, entirely incapable of affection. The social education patiently and ingeniously imparted to her transformed the little wild beast into a human being. But it also made her a member of a particular variety of Western civilisation. Had she received her education in China, she would of course have become a Buddhist or Taoist and would have manifested the mental characters peculiar to the Chinese. Had she been educated in Soviet Russia, the characteristics which have been so shrewdly detected as peculiar to the Slav temperament would doubtless have been observable in her character, and her writings would have been devoted to the expression of the abominable doctrines of communism and atheism. Western civilisation

transforms the babies born in its midst from dumb animals into Western civilised beings. It does so from a very early age, so that a normal child of five or six has already acquired an enormous number of the traits and opinions peculiar to members of Western civilisation.

That social education raises modern civilised man not only above the savage, but above the brute beast. He may well be proud of those advantages. The means of knowledge and intelligent judgment have never been so vast. The foolish opinions which were current in less enlightened ages have been clearly shown to be irrational, devoid of justification, opposed to common knowledge. They have been completely exposed, refuted, exploded. Yet the influence exercised by those opinions continues to be little affected by the advance of intelligence. That influence does not depend upon available knowledge or intelligence. It does not depend upon argument or evidence. It depends upon established authority.

Views which do not rest on valid grounds are inculcated and cultivated by the social

education imparted in Western civilisation because unless this were done that social structure could not carry on. It would not command loyalty. It would be universally viewed as a criminal and insane atrocity. The people who profit by the established institutions of Western civilisation would be in danger of losing that profit. It is accordingly quite useless to disprove those views or to argue against them. The only way to destroy the influence and authority which they enjoy would be to destroy the established institutions for the protection of which they are indispensable.

Views and opinions are deflected by prejudice. That is regarded as one of the unfortunate disabilities of human nature. That is, of course, true. The wide range of human thought renders it particularly liable to be influenced by wishes. There is a strong tendency to believe that what we wish were true is true. That tendency was so pronounced in the thought of savage humanity, that it proceeded unchecked to an extent which is almost inconceivable to the modern mind. Savage humanity, having but an extremely

limited experience and knowledge, habitually thought that wish-fulfilment was as important as the use of reasonable means and skill in procuring the ordinary necessities of life. That unchecked deflection of the mind by wish-fulfilment or prejudice constituted what is known as magic, and became later known as religion. Owing to the great extension of common knowledge and experience in modern humanity such a faith in the validity of wish-fulfilment has become impossible, except among the most ignorant and backward populations, unless it is artificially preserved. The deflection of thought by wishes or prejudices is nevertheless an inevitable phenomenon of human nature, and the greatest care has to be exercised in scientific observations to provide for the elimination of what is spoken of as the personal equation.

But the deflection of judgment, which is so conspicuous and so general in modern thought, can seldom be set down to such trifling personal equations. The prejudices which deflect modern thought are much more gross. They are not traceable to the natural disposition of human nature, but to propagated opinion.

In fact, the whole of current culture is employed, not in eliminating the proclivity to natural prejudice, but on the contrary, in inculcating, intensifying, promoting and creating by every means available and with the most ingenious and unceasing industry prejudices which no sane human being would otherwise entertain.

What goes by the name of education consists of little else than the inculcation of traditional prejudices. Any obstacle placed in the way of performing the task gives rise to outbursts of moral indignation on the part of those who defend the liberty of opinion and the freedom of teaching. So paramount is the inculcation of prejudices accounted that it is quite impossible to put a stop to it. One of the arguments of those who are anxious that schools should not be used in such a manner as to safeguard people against prejudices, is that unless those prejudices are inculcated at the earliest possible opportunity in the pliable minds of children any effort to implant them later would have no chance of being successful. The world can only be preserved relatively safe for traditional prejudices if these are inoculated into the minds of children in the

first seven years of life. The psychological understanding displayed in that view is sound. In the handing down of prejudices resting on the authority of tradition and not on valid grounds, the first seven years of life count for more than all subsequent years.

The success of the plan has been investigated only recently by a lady at Columbia University, who made one of those surveys by means of tabulated questionnaires in which American educationalists excel. The result of the enquiry conducted among school children under the age of eight who had received proper religious and other instruction was that the fierceness of their traditional prejudices exceeded in violence those displayed by any adult fanatic. Protestant children thought that all Roman Catholics and Jews should be exterminated. Roman Catholic children looked upon Protestants as fuel for hell-fire. Few of the children were aware of the existence of such people as infidels or atheists, but those who had heard rumours concerning such monsters imagined that they were to be recognised by the presence of horns on their heads and by a hoof-like deformity of their

lower extremities. Other traditional prejudices, such as those which serve to support nationalism, are instilled with the same care from earliest years. English children of the same ages as the American children examined by the Columbia University lady used to be convinced that all Frenchmen subsisted on a diet of frogs and snails and that all American men were in the habit, when sitting at dinner, of placing their feet on the table-cloth.

Those may be extreme and exaggerated instances, but they are of the same kind as the prejudices with which the whole education of human beings is normally coloured. It is generally noticeable that as children grow up, the prejudices artificially inculcated during the school years tend to become somewhat softened, although they leave their imprint upon the adult mind whatever opinions it may acquire. But, although early education is rightly deemed indispensable in order that traditional prejudices may be imparted at all, the efforts devoted to cultivating and maintaining them are never relaxed. All channels of information and expression are subject to a watchful and exacting censorship. This

is automatically exercised over literature, the Press, the theatre, and even the radio, so that criticism of views out of harmony with an attitude of veneration for existing institutions, such as the State, nationalism, capitalism, religion, sexual morals, is maintained within safe limits. Traditional prejudices are preserved at the price only of unceasing vigilance.

Nothing appears more difficult than the task of cultivating and maintaining prejudices. It is clearly absurd, is it not? to suggest, assume, or assert that the prejudices so laboriously instilled and promoted are due to an inevitable infirmity of the human mind.

The suggestion savours of insane extravagance. So do the resulting effects manifested in the prevalent conflicts of opinion. But that insanity commonly ascribed to human nature is the inevitable effect of the structure of a civilisation which must stand or fall with the prejudices which it takes pains to propagate. Hence they must at any cost be maintained despite all knowledge, experience, logic, and the most elementary sanity. It is indispensable that the mind of humanity as a whole should be kept in a condition of artificially



produced inefficiency, that it should not rely upon valid grounds or intelligence, but on the authority of traditional prejudices having no valid grounds.

It is owing to that complete obliteration and repudiation of the criteria which would be used by any medical man or magistrate in judging of the sanity of an individual that, side by side with clear, realistic, penetrating intelligence, every stage of ignorance and irrational opinion is able to thrive. When we speak in a general manner of the views and knowledge of the present time, we usually have in mind the conclusions, views and knowledge current among the majority of intelligent and fairly well informed persons. Those views, advanced or not, are thought of as representing the present state of human knowledge and wisdom. But they are, in point of fact, confined to a numerically small proportion of people, and entirely set aside, in conducting human affairs. The inhabitants of the world at the present time do not as a whole belong, mentally, to the twentieth century. Only an infinitesimally small proportion does. A much larger proportion belongs, so far as regards

the contents and development of their minds, to the Middle Ages, or to other periods, more or less remote, of history. That state of things is not a normal, natural, or inevitable feature of human society. It is the result of the traditional foundation of civilisation. The human mind is a product of the social environment in which it develops. If that environment is forced by its constitution to set aside the criteria of sane intelligence, the distinction between valid and invalid thought, human minds growing in that civilisation cannot be expected to be rational or sane.

It has become a commonplace of modern psychology that opinions are not so much reasoned conclusions as wish-fulfilments similar to those of which we hear in the Freudian theory of dreams. The truth of this is too patent to be disputed. But what is commonly overlooked is the fact that the wishes which seek fulfilment in the average person's opinions are not, for the most part, his own personal wishes, but the wishes of those most vitally interested in the maintenance of traditional civilisation. The wishes are those which are suggested by their propaganda. When reference is

currently made to the ignorance, the folly, the fierce prejudices manifested by aggregate majorities of human beings, the reference is, properly speaking, not to the natural mental condition of mankind in the present age of the world, but to the effects of traditional civilisation upon it.

That folly and those prejudices must necessarily become intensified the more pronounced grows the discrepancy between available intelligence and the traditions which civilisation must preserve or die. The confusion of the modern mind cannot but become greater as the maladjustments of traditional civilisation become more strained, more disorderly, more chaotic.

## CHAPTER XI

# DEMOCRACY

THE OBLITERATION of the criteria of thought makes democracy impossible. When opinions founded on valid grounds and opinions founded on none are accounted equally entitled to respect, the scales being heavily weighted in favour of the latter, when sanity and insanity are set on the same level, democracy built upon that basis can only be a madhouse let loose. Social order cannot be built upon mental chaos. Democracy has proved itself impracticable, absurd, and intolerable. No other result could be expected.

But the fantastic experiment of modern democracy built upon a criminal organisation and a madhouse is irrelevant as regards the principle of democracy. The breakdown of modern democracy is not due to that principle, and has no bearing on proving or disproving it. It is due to the defiance of sanity and the studied cultivation of insanity in defence of the authority of tradition and constituted abuses. Social and political efficiency cannot be extracted out of mental deficiency.

The legitimate purpose of democracy is to minimise injustice, not to impose opinions. If it should be proposed to settle a problem of astronomy, or archæology, by a count of heads, the suggestion would be regarded as that of a lunatic. It would, however, be no more insane than is the unrestricted and undefined application of the principle of democracy in traditional civilisation. The principle has developed as the only means of obtaining any approach in administrative governments to social justice, that is, any protection against grossly oppressive violence. Defence against that violence cannot be delegated. Justice cannot be dispensed from above by paternally benevolent ruling classes. They are, as already noted, unqualified to apprehend the meaning of justice, which can be fully appreciated by those only who suffer from injustice. Every measure of social justice has, accordingly, been wrung from privileged and powerful persons by those who have suffered from that privileged power. And since every class is oppressed by those who possess more power, the only possible safeguard against oppression is universal democratic power. That ostensible protection

against gross social oppressions and violence is the function of democracy, and the ground for its necessity. It is the reason why it has come into being. Its function is not to settle vexed questions of astronomy or archæology, or any other opinion.

But democratic modern traditional states have inherited their notion of the nature and function of the State from feudal oligarchies, from absolute monarchies, from ancient theocracies. In the enthusiasm for the conquest of democratic liberty it never once crossed the mind of anyone that the State could be anything but an absolute ruler possessing the same unlimited despotic rights as a King by divine right, a Czar, Grand Turk, or Pope. Democratic power was understood as the power of any party that could command a sufficient number of votes to do exactly according to their fancy without limit, restriction, definition, rhyme or reason. Democracy resulting by an inevitable social mechanism from the natural reaction of the excluded classes against the oppression of the exclusive classes, could, it was never doubted, be used for altogether different purposes than protection against injustice. Not to protect people against being killed, despoiled,

and roughly treated without power of appeal or protest, but to enable people to dictate to others what they shall drink, read, or how they shall amuse themselves, has been conceived to be the legitimate right of democratic power. Democracy has been used, in short, to enable the most insane portions of the population to impose any of their opinions.

Such a state of affairs is not democracy, and no so-called democratic state in traditional civilisation has any right to the description. A political structure in which people are directed by law as to what they shall drink, whether they shall smoke, how they shall marry, is not a democracy. It is a tyranny nowise different from those in which rulers by right divine or grand inquisitors exercised somewhat more moderate and restricted powers. The fact that the tyrants instead of being rulers by right divine are numerical majorities does not make their tyranny a democracy. A democracy is a political order in which every citizen has the resource of appealing against intolerable oppression, and a political disorder which enforces intolerable oppression does not function as a democracy, no matter how

meticulously the count of heads is carried out.

A democracy presupposes a minimum of ordinary human intelligence. It is impossible in a community where intelligence is deliberately sabotaged, where the ordinary criteria of intelligent thought are repudiated, and no distinction between it and groundless opinions is, even in principle, admitted. In such a condition of the social aggregate the conversion of democratic power into a tyranny more oppressive than that of an autocracy or a theocracy is inevitable. The success of the democratic means of stultifying the operation of intelligence is demonstrated by what is termed the pendulum swing of popular caprice which, in England for example, brings about a regular alternation of the electoral plebiscite from one set of principles to their exact opposites, thereby clearly showing that the electorate is entirely devoid of any principles, convictions, or opinions whatsoever.

The repudiation of the criteria of intelligence is, as has been seen, the inevitable consequence of the social structure whose existence and security requires the preferential protection of the fictions upon which it is founded and the



stultification of the functions of human intelligence necessary to maintain that unnatural condition of imbecility. Apart from that requirement, the principles of democracy and any application of them are totally and irremediably incompatible with that structure. The colossal fraud of democracy in modern traditional civilisations consists in the fiction that the power conferred by a right to record a vote is in any manner comparable with the power possessed by dominant interests which enjoy complete control of every other means of power, including absolute economic power. The domination exercised in modern industrial civilisation by the holders of power is actually more effective and more complete than that which was wielded by absolute autocracies or by land-owning aristocracies. The economic control is much more absolute and searching, much more disproportionate, invulnerable, overpowering, and adapted to fine manipulation. The means of physical coercion which go with that control correspond to the difference between modern and mediæval armaments. The means of mental control through educational institutions, and above

all through the Press, have increased in the same gigantic proportions as the means of economic and physical coercion. The puerile fiction that the vote constitutes any sort of weapon of resistance or protection against those overwhelming realities of power could scarcely be put forward except in a humorous spirit if the domination of ruling power over the minds of the people were not so effective as to reduce the latter to the condition of imbecility required for the acceptance of similar myths. Democratic principles which were and are professedly advocated as a general diffusion of power among the *demos*, or people in general, serve, on the contrary, the exactly opposite purpose and function of promoting, protecting, and preserving the domination of the real holders of power, the predatory interests of industrial capitalistic civilisation. Hence the latter's zealous and enthusiastic defence of democratic principles. During the Revolution of October 1917, in Russia, the proclamation of their principles by the Bolsheviks, a small handful of intellectuals, caused, much to their surprise, the bulk of the population of Russia, the

to rally from all parts of the country to their side. The former holders of economic power loudly protested in the name of liberal democratic principles against that outrageously undemocratic procedure. They, using all the formulas and slogans of liberal democracy, appealing to the sacred cause of liberty, clamoured for an election, the use of the vote, a parliament, or Duma, of the accredited representatives of the people that they might secure the government of the people, for the people, by the people. They were well aware of the function and effect of democratic principles. They knew full well that by their means the desires and demands of the people so overwhelmingly expressed by the spontaneous direct action of the people could be effectively stultified and checkmated. Democracy is the form of government best adapted to the interests of a controlling middle-class of predatory industrialists, commercialists, financiers, enjoying complete economic control and that exercised by the Press and other means of education of public opinion. It is entirely safe, and wears the ingenious disguise of "government by the people,"

and all the other liberal paraphernalia of the fundamental myth of civilisation. The more overwhelming and firmly entrenched predatory interests are, the more they are democratic. Democracy has accordingly assumed its most complete and perfect form in the United States of America. American democracy has resulted in the worst, the most shamelessly corrupt, the most unprincipled and lawless government ever perpetrated. The apprehension of the distinction between the stupendous fraudulent fiction of democracy and the facts which experience has slowly revealed has caused the machinery of democratic government by votes to fall into general contempt. It has come to be regarded with hopeless, helpless, resigned indifference. People have ceased to vote.

The damaged reputation and functional breakdown of democracy in many quarters is the only visible ruin marking the dissolution of traditional civilisation which has been widely admitted. It has offered an occasion to predatory interests to whom the farcical pretences of democratic principles, however expedient, were inconvenient and burdensome, a welcome occasion of repudiating them. Such

a repudiation would be superfluous, and therefore unwise, at present in a country like America where the dominant ruling interests still retain complete control. The democratic and liberal slogans accordingly flourish undisputed in a country where the absolutism of predatory interests is as yet not seriously challenged or impaired, and a freedom of speech is indulgently and contemptuously permitted which is innocuous. Where, however, the menace of intelligence to less uniform consolidated interests is greater, the farce of democracy is more apt to become so troublesome as to lose in some measure its humorous character. There is a danger that democracy might actually perform its professed function of giving expression to the sentiments of the people. Such an abuse of democracy is, of course, not to be contemplated. Not foolish and cumbersome democracy, it is urged, but strong, ruthless force freed from hypocritical concessions is needed in such a national emergency in order to maintain the predatory power of traditional civilisation in its hour of peril. The revival of the mediæval tyranny of the Borgias and Sforzas, the resurrection of the age of condottieri and

of Machiavelli in Italy, has been hailed with admiration and applause. Mediæval Spain, mediæval Poland, mediæval German Junkerdom, mediæval English Toryism have either adopted the audacious repudiation of liberalism or avowed themselves Fascist at heart, and the great democratic American republic which could not, without treason to the principles of its glorious Constitution, recognise the existence of an abominable tyranny in Russia, courteously fawns in amity and approval upon the unobjectionable tyranny of Italian gangsters. Fascism is nationalism, predatory capitalism, and traditional civilisation at bay, with mask and gloves off. The hollow pretences and formulas of pseudo-democracy which have hitherto served to clothe its obscene nudity are cast aside in a desperate situation. When the house is on fire or the ship is sinking, the delicacies of conventional modesty are dispensed with.

Democracy became established for the purpose, and in the name of liberty. In a traditional world where privileged power has ruled, where it has protected its tyranny over men's lives by tyranny over their minds, where irrational opinions have been privileged, every

advance towards intelligence of action or of thought has been possible only by an advance in liberty. Liberty has been the condition of any measure of progress. Liberty has accordingly been the slogan of all advance in social capacity, in knowledge, in intelligence.

But why has liberty been so indispensable to development ? Only because the main obstacle to human advance under the conditions of a traditional civilisation has been the tyranny of privileged powers and the authority of irrational and mendacious traditional opinions. Democratic liberty has been sought as an end in itself. The result has been that the victory of democratic principles has bestowed equal liberty on privileged power and on its victims, on the valid opinions which were suppressed by tyranny and on the irrational tyranny which oppressed them. Democratic liberty, like the rain from heaven, has fallen alike upon the just and the unjust. It has made privileged power inviolable, it has made the authority of tradition inviolable. By aiming at liberty as a good in itself, and not as a means, it has, in the name of liberty, set aside justice and the criteria of valid opinion.

The liberty of every person and the liberty

of every opinion are not good in themselves. The liberty of a thief or a murderer is not a social good. The liberty of a lunatic is not a social good. Yet that is the kind of social good which democracy has established in a criminal and irrational social structure, by setting aside all other considerations in its blind devotion to the fetish of liberty as such. It has bestowed enhanced liberty upon thieves and murderers, enhanced liberty on lunatics.

Liberty has been the precious condition of all advance, but it has been a condition, a means, not an end. It is of no advantage to a social structure that thieves and murderers should enjoy liberty. In the Middle Ages the Roman Church enjoyed full liberty to draw into its tentacles the entire wealth of Europe. It enjoyed full liberty to exterminate intelligence. Democratic liberty became gradually established, not in order to guarantee that liberty, but in order to destroy it. Yet by making liberty an abstract good, it has accomplished the exact reverse of what it professedly set out to accomplish. Democratic liberty to-day protects the privileged power to rob and to murder. Democratic liberty set out to check



the liberty of authoritarian opinion. But it has had the same effect on thought and opinion as on social justice. It has guaranteed the inviolable liberty of the tyrannies which it was its object to put down. Democracy has failed because it substituted a false issue for the real issue. It has striven for liberty, which is a means of combating tyranny, social and intellectual, and by substituting the means for the end it has consolidated the social and intellectual tyranny which it was its purpose to abolish.

It is absurd to urge, as is constantly done, that criminal social tyranny cannot easily be distinguished from social justice, or that valid opinions cannot be clearly differentiated from authoritarian traditional opinions. The plea belongs to that specious sophistry which is fostered by the substitution of liberty for the real issue. Democracy does not for a moment allow the plea that it is not possible to judge certainly of the guilt of a murderer or a thief. That in predatory civilisation the thief and the murderer are not individuals, but the civilisation itself, does not alter the case so far as regards the plea of inability to judge. The norms of judgment are exactly the same in political

or social crime as in any court of law set up for the trial of individual crime. Democracy does not allow the plea that it is not possible to detect a dangerous lunatic. But the criteria of judgment are exactly the same in the case of an institution which propagates, by democratic right, lunatic delusions as in the case of the dangerous lunatic which democracy claims the right to restrain. In any apologetic defence of undefined, unrestricted, and indiscriminate liberty, democracy is thrown back upon stark and patent sophistry.

The only social value and purpose of liberty is to afford protection against the liberty to injure which democracy, grafted upon an authoritarian and criminal traditional system, protects.

The preliminary condition of democracy is the abolition of traditional social crime and authority and the protection of valid intelligence. Mankind, driven by the force of circumstances, has put the cart before the horse. Not until it has retraced its footsteps and dealt with those evils which it was the purpose of democratic liberty to deal with, can it be fit for democracy. That task cannot be effected by democratic methods. Democracy itself has never been established by democratic methods.

Every step in the long struggle for democratic liberty has been achieved by utterly undemocratic means. Democratic liberty has been established by brutal force, by violence and the threat of violence. Its rights have been wrung from privileged power in the face of desperate opposition. Democratic liberty is the result of the repudiation of democratic methods. The task which blundering democracy has been unable or unwilling to perform cannot be brought to a conclusion by democratic methods. It cannot be accomplished by toleration of crime and of insanity. It can be accomplished, like every advance in democratic liberty, only by ruthless and intolerant violence.

Social liberty means liberty to be rational and social. Nothing has been less conducive to that liberty than the monstrous combination of democracy with traditional social crime and mental deformation. The despotism or dictatorship that will repudiate that insane alliance and stamp out evil like vermin under its heel shall be the liberator of mankind and shall bestow upon it that liberty which traditional democracy has been unfitted to win. It shall make the world safe for true democracy.

## CHAPTER XII

# LIBERALISM

IN A WORLD blindly drifting to its doom, the blindest forces and the most baneful are not those of outright oppression, depredation, and reaction. Brute reaction, using every resource of power and perfidy to stave off its fate, obeys the urge of every beast at bay. It forwards, after its fashion, the process of which it is a part, speeding its consummation. Far more prejudicial are the insidious forces of delusion, the well-meaning forces which pave the path to doom with good intentions.

The declared aim of liberal thought is, in brief, to amend traditional civilisation while preserving it, to persuade engines of war, that is, sovereign states, into refraining from war, to bring about the social organisation of mankind through the kind offices of anti-social interests, to evolve co-operation out of competition, the good of mankind out of predatory profit, to produce white by the mixture of various shades of black.

The lack of enthusiasm with which those noble aims are received in less enlightened quarters is all the more unaccountable to the liberal minded when the past achievements of liberal thought are contemplated. Are not all the liberties that have elevated modern democracy above the grossness of mediæval barbarism the outcome of liberal thought? They are. Hence is a world reformed in the light of liberal principles, with its intensified nationalism, its intensified predatory individualism, its reverently protected authoritarian tradition in direr and more desperate need of reform to-day than ever before.

That urgent and acute need is the outcome of the failure of liberalism. To look to the cause for the remedy, in accordance with the simple logic of liberalism, appears a questionable procedure. The ineffectiveness, the inconclusiveness of liberal reform in the past is not, as has been vaguely alleged, the result of an "inevitability of gradualness," of the impracticability of sudden and drastic change. Liberal movements have not in the past been confronted with any such inevitability or impracticability. Again and again they have enjoyed complete control of

the situation. The Protestant Reformation, the English Puritan revolution, the American revolution, the French revolution, the nineteenth-century liberal movements even, have had the opportunity of bringing about effective reform. If they have not done so, it is because they had no desire to do so. If they have produced nothing but futile compromise, it is because they desired compromise. They desired it for the same reasons and in the same manner as liberal thought to-day desires to reform traditional civilisation by preserving it scrupulously unchanged.

Liberal reforms have brought about social advance, but they have at the same time retarded the process and removed its term to an indefinite distance. The Protestant Reformation, for example, was a positive calamity. Its reactionary and retarding effects have far outweighed any advantages which it was instrumental in compassing. Had it taken place in the eighteenth or the nineteenth century its character would have been entirely different and its beneficial effects incalculable. It was the revolt inevitably due to take place against the most nefarious and calamitous power by

which human society has been afflicted, a power which brought the first European civilisation to ruin and throughout long ages stifled the second. Revolted Protestantism was fired with moral indignation against that power. It denounced it in language identical in violence and purport with that of a Soviet *bez-boshnik* society. But the revolt took place at a time when the general attitude toward that power was wholly liberal, that is, semi-logical, consisting of half-way thought and inconsistent compromise. The revolt against the Christian Church remained Christian. As a consequence the tyranny and obscurantism of the "reformed" bibliolatrous Judaism which was substituted for historical Christianity proved a thousand times more nefarious and calamitous than that against which it had revolted. The obscurantism and tyranny of the Roman Church itself became greatly intensified. It was at the time of the Protestant revolt well on the way to almost complete reversion to the ancient paganism upon which it had been originally engrafted. The Protestant Reformation saved the Christian religion, as all liberal movements have saved that which they set out

to combat. The Roman Church itself was reformed. It resumed the fanatical character which had been about to become submerged in paganism, while the liberalised bibliolatrous Christianity extended over the modern world a new tyranny and obscurantism far exceeding those exercised by the power which had excited liberal moral indignation.

Similar in all essentials have been the effects of liberal thought in every other field. The quasi-revolutions, the semi-reformations which it has inspired have been palsied by its intrinsic and incurable nature. They have delayed the social progress which they have in appearance promoted, they have preserved the abuses which they have professedly opposed. Those baneful effects grow more pronounced as the social process itself proceeds towards its logical term. In the eighteenth century the good effects of liberal thought were great and its evil effects small ; in the twentieth century its good effects are small, its evil effects great.

The cecity of liberal thought prevents it from perceiving that the present crisis of traditional civilisation is unlike any previous one. It is



different because it is, in both the logical and chronological sequence, the last. The marginal no-man's-land of compromise which is the natural habitat of liberal thought, therefore no longer exists. That is the essential tragedy of homeless liberal thought in these times.

All reforms have been redistributions of ruling social power. That power has become successively transferred from one ruling order to another, from autocrat to aristocrat, to democrat, from priest to king, to noble, to burgher, to industrialist, to banker. Thus it is that the essential structure of traditional civilisation has remained unaltered throughout successive liberalisations. There remains at the present juncture no order, no class, except the lowermost, the exploited proletarian class, to which social power can be extended and transferred. But that transference is unlike any preceding one, for it implies not the redistribution, but the abolition of class power.

To abolish class power is outside the scope of liberal thought. Liberalism is historically the creed of the *middle* class. Hence its whole middling character. Hence its moderation, its moderate logic, its moderate consistency, its

mediocrity. Moderate, middling, middle-class liberalism is from its nature and function set upon a middle course. It is compelled by the circumstances of its median situation to wear two countenances, according to the direction in which it faces. It is committed to combating on one front the same logic and the same principles which it proclaims with noble moral eloquence on the other. The necessity of its mean situation imposes upon it the duplicity, tortuosity, equivocation, and irreconcilable inconsistency which constitute its hitherto practical, but now desperately unpractical, genius for compromise. The glorious achievements, the triumphs of the democratic liberties of middle-class liberalism have consisted in the transference of power to the middle-class. A glorious achievement which does not differ from any of the squabbles and scrambles for power of pre-liberal history. The same linguistic sophistry which has in turn been used by every form of contending class power has, indeed, been widely adopted by middle-class liberalism. In precisely the same manner as kings used to style themselves "England," "France," etc., and represented themselves as

the fathers of the people, the defenders of justice, the liberal middle-class has habitually styled itself "the people," liberalism has dubbed itself democracy, "government of the people, for the people, by the people." In bestowing impressive titles upon governments of the people, for the bankers, by the bankers, liberal magniloquence has surpassed the imaginative metaphors favoured by Oriental despots and Holy Roman Emperors. Cultured and enlightened academic liberal thought has raised the linguistic deception to an even higher plane, and spoken of the ruling class as "mankind," "the human race," "humanity." Those insidious verbal frauds have passed from language into thought, so that liberal culture is painfully shocked at the unreasonableness of people who draw a distinction between the good of the ruling middle-class and the good of mankind and who raise doubts as to the competence of the ruling middle-class to devise the best possible good of the human race. Old time Tory aristocracies and Russian Little Fathers were similarly surprised that anyone should question their being the best judges of what was good for the people.

Those linguistic and mental acrobatics do not alter the fact that the liberal thought of a well-to-do ruling middle-class can no more step out of the orbit of the traditional social structure than the leopard can change his spots. And the more it strives to do so, which it commonly does quite honestly and sincerely, the more open-minded and advanced it is, the greater, in proportion to the speciousness of its delusive hopes, and to the charm of the fool's paradises it sets up, is the lethal banefulness of its effects. If at this turning point of its career, the human race, corrupted by seven thousand years of traditional civilisation, is blind to essential facts, it is chiefly to the specious and mellifluous plausibilities of liberal thought, rather than to the bold propagandas of vested power, that the perilous and inopportune cecity is due.

Advanced liberal thought, not without some consciousness of its own heroic daring, can perceive and eloquently proclaim the dismal character and plight of the traditional social structure. Thus, for example, Dr. John Dewey, the venerable doyen of American liberal philosophising, delivers himself upon the subject in

## BREAKDOWN

the following terms : " The doctrine that the most potent instrument of widespread, enduring, and objective social changes must be left at the mercy of purely private desires for purely personal gains is a doctrine of anarchy. Our present insecurity of life is the fruit of the adoption of this anarchic doctrine." The pretence that this anarchy constitutes social order, and is a thing to be preserved, revered, and maintained could not be more flatly gain-said. Dr. Dewey further notes that in one portion of the world, namely, in the Soviet Socialist Republic, that anarchy is absent, and has been replaced by organisation " of economic resources toward social order and stability." Having thus clearly indicated the choice offered between " anarchy " and " social order and stability," Dr. Dewey becomes strangely embarrassed. " What stands in the way," he goes on to remark, " is a lot of outworn traditions, moth-eaten slogans and catchwords, that do substitute for thought, *as well as* " (the italics are mine) " our entrenched predatory self-interests." The " entrenched predatory self-interests," that is, the " purely private desires for purely personal gains," which have

just been stated to be the root and cause of the anarchy are now relegated to a secondary place. The shift of emphasis serves to elucidate the following startling remark : " To hold that such organised planning is possible only in a communistic society is to surrender the case to communism." Why the case cannot be " surrendered " to communism, Dr. Dewey does not tell us. It would seem that on the strength of " moth-eaten slogans and catchwords that do substitute for thought," the very suggestion is, in a Euclidean sense, absurd, and that the contemplation of the alternative to anarchy is therefore self-evidently excluded. It may incidentally be noted, as part of the slippery incline by which the argument slides away from the solid ground of its premises, that the Socialist Soviets are not, and do not profess to be, " a communistic society." It is their professed hope to become one. For the present, however, the only point of differentiation between their " social order and stability," and the " anarchy " of Western civilisation consists in the exclusion of the " entrenched predatory self-interests," and " purely private desires for purely personal gains " which are the cause of

that "anarchy." The only alternative to preserving that cause would seem to be to abolish it. Not so, however, in the logic of liberal thought.

One might be perplexed even to imagine any escape from the alternative were not one acquainted with the strange epidemic which has been raging of late in the ranks of American liberalism, and which surpasses any disorder which liberal alchemy has manifested in its two-thousand-year-old attempt to extract white out of black. A whole crop of "plans" has of late been produced, and is daily being brought forth as fast as they can be turned out by the printing presses. They are in all essentials alike. They are plans to save entrenched predatory interests by insuring the secure satisfaction of their purely private desires for purely personal gains. They consist in the planned organisation of predatory self-interests, by predatory self-interests, for predatory self-interests. The plan is, in fact, already in full operation : it is known as Fascism.

Liberal thought is at the present juncture, when the compromises upon which it has hitherto subsisted are no longer possible, excruciatingly impaled on the horns of an

inexorable dilemma. The only way to abolish the anarchy resulting from predatory self-interests is to abolish predatory self-interests. Liberal plans to save them more or less by abolishing them more or less are really no longer in question. The only question that confronts the Br'er Rabbit of liberalised predatory capitalism is : With what sauce would he like to be cooked ? When he replies that he does not want to be cooked, he is getting away from the point. In the contemplation of those sauces, that is, of the means of abolishing anarchy, and not in the choice of the result, lies properly at the present time the sole scope for the peculiar talents of liberal thought.

There are in the field of liberal vision two alternative ways of restraining predatory self-interests without treating them with such violence as might cause them to suffer serious injury. The one is to talk them round, amiably, reasonably, and persuasively so as to lead them to perceive the folly of being inspired by purely private desires for purely personal gains, and to induce them to be inspired instead by sweetness and light and a consuming concern for the good of the human race. The other is to use the



vote to place resolutions on the statute book abolishing or restricting entrenched predatory self-interests.

The first of those proposals is a form of one of the oldest delusions at the basis of civilised tradition, the basic myth, in fact, upon which it is founded. The Christian religion rests upon that ancient myth of social idealism. It assumed it as self-evident that the social world can be made good by making people good. It had no suspicion of the differences between individual and social psychology. It had no suspicion of the fact that the social mechanism operates in the opposite direction and that it is not reversible. People can be made good only by making the social world good.

Hence the pained uncomprehending surprise felt at the inexplicable failure of Christianity after nearly two thousand years devoted to the cultivation of individual goodness. To traditional idealism it is wholly incomprehensible that the result should be an unsurpassed record of inhumanity and injustice. The idealistic delusion, universal until the late nineteenth century, destroyed the first European civilisation and is a canker which has crippled and is

now, through the offices of liberal thought, helping to destroy the second. It first assumed the proportions of a doctrinal dogma in the Hellenistic Levant during the period of complete mental decay which gave rise to rationalised and liberalised Oriental superstitions, esoteric theosophies, occultisms, and the like mental derangements. Among the incomputable falsifications of thought resulting from the disaster of Christianity is the thorough falsification of history. It is still, in consequence of that falsification, vaguely imagined that the doctrine of universal love was at one time an active factor influencing social facts—whatever corruption into lip-service it may later have suffered. The historical testimony that this was never so is definite. The earliest Christological sects which professed the Sermon on the Mount, exhibited the same intolerant and jealous hatred which have ever since been combined with those unctuous professions. The bitterness of Christian hatred was not even expurgated from the mythical accounts of the fabled founder of the religion of love, who is represented, in keeping with the spirit of all his worshippers, as branding his contemporaries

as a generation of vipers, rivalling the Hebrew prophets in the violence of his sectarian denunciations, and consigning his opponent to hell-fire with the same ruthlessness as any Spanish inquisitor. In the primitive Christian Church, as early as the days of St. Jerome, the vivacity of the brethren was such that after the excitement attending the election of a Shepherd in a Roman church they left a hundred of their corpses on the floor.

The delusion that the social conflict of interests can be transmuted, mitigated, or in any manner whatsoever modified by doctrines of universal love is as naïve as any religious fable. Love of humanity has never been and can never be, except in the form of a dangerous delusion, a factor in the social process, for it does not correspond to any factual reality, social or psychological. Love of humanity is a theory, not an emotion. The emotion of love can be elicited by concrete objects only. To the realistic thinker the welfare of humanity is the supreme end and good, because he perceives that the good, freedom, growth, self-realisation of the individual who is a social product are dependent wholly upon that welfare. But the

collective human herd, as it is shaped by traditional civilisation, can arouse only disgust, loathing and contempt. At most, the horror which it inspires may be submerged in a feeling of infinite pity. Love, in any sense of the term, it cannot inspire and has never inspired in the heart of any human being.

The delusion of Christian-born liberal thought that other psychological elements, moral principles, humanitarian ideals, or even enlightened self-interest can be substituted for predatory individualist self-interests in a social mechanism created and operated by the latter, the delusion that the anarchy which is termed injustice can be amended by the voluntary action of those who do not suffer, but, on the contrary, profit by it, are but variations on the Christian theme, and equally fantastic and pernicious. The self-protective instincts of those who hold power doubtless inclines them favourably to those doctrines. That the business of amendment, the business of dispensing justice, should be left to them, and should be carried out with the wise moderation, the enlightened genius for compromise, the innocuous inconclusiveness which has ever marked the efforts

of liberal thought, rather than that the delicate business should be left to the violent and immoderate passions of the victims of injustice appears, no doubt, much to be preferred. But unfortunately the mechanism of social adaptation, obscured by the exalted ethical nomenclature of traditional idealism, cannot be supplanted or circumvented. Social injustice, notwithstanding all legal fictions to the contrary, can be effectively put down only by its victims.

Apart altogether from the intrinsic fantasticality of the alchemic procedures by which liberal thought proposes to induce "entrenched predatory self-interests" to abolish or moralise themselves, the simplicity with which it can contrive to forget that, within the existing legal bounds of that criminal anarchy, there flourishes, in addition to that anarchy itself, every form of indictable fraud, sharp practice, blackmail, imposture, and scullionery that can contrive to evade the law, and the blessed innocence which suggests that the sewer of swindle and unscrupulousness should be utilised as the cleansing baptismal waters that shall bring about "organised planning" and social endeavour for the good of mankind—that beatific

simplicity or blinkered blindness cannot but excite amazement.

The alternative choice offered to the Br'er Rabbit of social anarchy is the legendary liberal sauce of the democratic vote. The puerile prescription has never been used by liberalism itself to achieve any of its own vaunted victories. Sweet and reasonable middle-class liberalism has preferred to put its trust in muskets. When by means of the vote a bill unpopular among the predatory self-interests of the linen manufacturers of northern Ireland was placed on the English statute book, their reply was to shoulder rifles with the indulgent approval, countenance, and support of all other predatory self-interests. Vital social conflicts have never been, and can never be decided by votes, assuming the fantastic impossibility of such a vote in a community whose mentality is entirely under the control of predatory self-interests, any more than vital international conflicts can be decided by pleasant talks on the banks of Lake Lemman.

People who are, owing to their deplorably prosperous situation, insufficiently intelligent to perceive those facts can scarcely be expected

to be sufficiently intelligent to devise plans of social organisation. There comes in the history of every system of inequitable power a time when opportunist expedients are futile. It is also the time when they are most desperately sought. To the thinker, those liberal, philanthropical expedients are of as much interest as the attempts of liberal clergymen partially to deridicularise religion.

They are of no interest because logic cannot stop half-way—neither the logic of the mind nor the logic of social events. Thus it is that human thought, when sufficiently disciplined into realistic honesty, appears to determine events. The thought which determines events is the thought which is sufficiently honest to be determined by the logic of events, of experience.

## CHAPTER XIII

# THE RUSSIAN EXPERIMENT

THE FACT which is in these days thrusting upon the attention of the most thoughtless the possibility that traditional civilisation may be coming to an end is that it has come to an end—so far as a considerable proportion of the modern world is concerned. Ever since 1917 the preoccupations of Western civilisation have had one haunting fact in view : Russia. International preoccupations, from the Versailles map to the Hoover Moratorium, the relations of political parties within nationalistic states, commerce, industry, economics, marriage and morals, the anxieties of religious bodies, every theme, every mental agitation within the length and breadth of Western civilisation during the last fifteen years has been dominated by one obsessing object : Russia.

Not without reason. It is far more than a political, social, or economic revolution which has taken place in Russia. Traditional civilisation which has occupied the stage of human



history without intermission since about the year 5000 B.C. has, not in an experimental farm or village, but over one-sixth of the area of the globe, come to an end. Completely. For the first time in history the authority of traditional myths and values has been wholly set aside. For the first time in history the organisation of a human society has been undertaken—with a view to organising, not to exploiting. For the first time in history the antique tradition which licensed robbery by private individuals and termed the arrangement social organisation has been uncompromisingly and utterly discarded. The event was at first spoken of as anarchy. Later it was referred to as the terror. It is now sometimes spoken of as an experiment.

The anarchy, terror, or experiment is going from bad to worse. It is succeeding. If it be possible to dismiss for a moment from one's mind the issues, the passions, the partisanship involved, the sheer concrete power of achievement manifested in that success is calculated to fill one with astonishment. The revolution itself, over the expanse of a Czarist empire armed to the teeth, and in the face of Kerensky

“ liberal ” enthusiasms, was a sufficiently remarkable feat. The long defence against the embattled forces of the world, the blockade, Winston Churchill’s expeditions, the Czecho-Slovak legion holding Siberia, the swarming armies equipped and supported by England and France, Dutov, Wrangle, Denikin pushing to the gates of Moscow, Yudenitch at the gates of Petrograd, Pilsudski and his berserker Poles, Esthonians, Letts, a battle line more extensive than that of the allies in the European War, amid internal treachery, espionage, sabotage, conspiracy, insurrection, famine, pestilence, destitution, exhaustion, all resulting in victory, complete, sweeping, unequivocal—if history contains another such epic of endurance and determination I have forgotten it. The French revolution withstood the like combined assaults of a world panic-stricken at the subversive principles that were to become the mild liberalism of the nineteenth century. But the strife was as the battle of Waterloo compared to the European war, by the side of the sustained struggle of a people whom, after Brest-Litovsk, the civilised world had called cowards. In the face of every artifice and machination of

hatred and malice, ostracised Russia has built herself up anew. Nay, not only has she repaired every ruin, she has raised a people out of age-long barbarism into progressive civilisation ; not only has she built herself up anew, but has planned to outstrip the world in security, and welfare. While traditional civilisation is sinking into despair, ruin, and misery, the condition of the people of the Soviet Republic is daily being raised to a standard of security which, whatever present shortcomings in the quality of food or of boots, has not been, as a uniform level common to a whole people, known throughout the history of traditional civilisation. Considered, I say, apart from all issues and partisan judgments, and regarded solely in the light of a concrete achievement of power and determination, it is without parallel.

How has revolutionary Russia been enabled to compass that achievement? The Soviets have clearly been fortunate in the ability of their leaders. But that alone is not sufficient to explain the miracle. " Bolshevik Russia is the only country which is to-day inspired by a living faith." The words are not mine. They are an eminent Church of England prelate's.

There seems to be little to add to them by way of elucidating the fact that the Soviet Union is living while the rest of the world is decrepit and dying. Traditional civilisation is desperately striving to maintain the authority of tradition, of antique formulas grown no longer credible. It is subsisting upon pretences, high-sounding sentiments suspended in mid-air, long-convicted untruths which nobody can be said to believe. It is a sham world mendaciously masquerading as a social organisation, a civilisation. In the United Soviet Republics the crushing incubus of an all-pervading make-believe has been lifted off the human mind. Its functioning has reverted to realism. Is it any wonder that the people of Soviet Russia are able to bear without wincing the official opinion of the Western world that predatory, nationalistic, Christian society is eminently good and Soviet society eminently evil? Is traditional civilisation qualified to pronounce on social good, and to pass ethical judgment on heroic Russia?

The gigantic revolution was not carried out by means of amiable conversations. It was carried out by the use of force. It was carried

out by a very small group of men whose call the masses of the people far and near answered in their millions as they had never answered the call of a Czar or the high sentiments of eloquent liberal orators. Nor have the admirable models of democratic methods been followed in the task of social organisation. The despotism, the tyranny of the methods adopted, have furnished a fertile theme for eloquent indignation in lands of liberty which are scarcely able to conceal their admiration for the Fascism of Signor Mussolini. Detached and open-minded liberal thinkers affect to bracket together the "dictatorship" of Stalin with that of the Italian gangster. I confess that, notwithstanding diligent enquiry in the likeliest quarters, I have not succeeded in satisfying myself that the phraseology employed is any better founded than the tales of "forced labour" hawked in the European Press. The Soviets are ruled by the Communist party. They are not ruled by the Czarist party, the capitalistic party, the Tory party, or the Church party. Whether the rule of those parties in other countries is preferable is, democratically speaking, a matter of opinion. The

system of local, regional, and central Soviets appears, to say the least, as commendable as that of ballot-boxes. The "dictatorship" of Stalin, who could derive more profit by standing behind the counter of an American store, appears to consist in invaluable firmness combined with singularly competent leadership resting upon elaborate consultation with all concerned. It may, of course, easily be that I am lamentably misinformed.

Be that, however, as it may, the terms "tyranny" and "dictatorship" are in this connection, of necessity, ambiguous. A Roman Catholic apologist remarked lately that any limitation or restriction placed upon Roman Catholics would always be spoken of by them, as they have always been spoken of, as "persecution." The partial attempts made in Mexico and in Spain to liberate those countries from the most appalling burden of economic, political, and mental tyranny that has ever crushed the very life of a people are referred to by Roman Catholics as "persecution." Their protests against those outrages are couched in the noblest language of liberal eloquence and resound with the inspiring terms

“liberty,” “personal freedom,” “democratic rights.” To allow full liberty to tyranny is no liberty. To check and put down tyranny calls for tyrannous dealing with tyranny. Soviet tyranny or dictatorship, taking the terms at whatever value one may please to attach to them, differs from all other tyrannies with which it is bracketed by liberal thought in the trifling circumstance that it is a tyranny against tyranny, a tyranny to end tyranny. A tyranny which denies liberty to predatory individual self-interests, which goes the length of restraining and punishing swindlers and defrauders, which impinges on the right to rob and to exploit, which places restrictions on the liberty to corrupt and stultify the minds of children, of terrorising the weak and the ignorant, which checks the liberty to delude and misrepresent, a tyranny which shows scant tenderness for all the tyrannies and abuses which thrive in lands of liberty, is the sort of tyranny which bids fair to bestow upon the human race a measure of liberty which it has never previously known.

The Soviet Union would not, I think, repudiate the depreciatory description of their social organisation as experimental. That has, indeed,

been emphasised by repeated modifications and adaptations. Power of modification and adaptation is the first requisite of any social organisation. It is by paralysing that power that traditional civilisations usually decay. But the Soviet "experiment" is an experiment in means of social organisation. It is no experiment in the relative merits of organisation and predatory anarchy.

I do not pretend to be competent to judge how far the methods of organisation adopted by Soviet Russia are likely to prove the best that can be devised, and I greatly doubt the competence of anyone else to judge of the matter. The proof will lie in the result. Those methods have so far accomplished more in a dozen years for the protection of human existence and the abolition of hunger and insecurity than traditional civilisation has accomplished in five thousand years. The conditions under which the experiment is being conducted do not permit of regarding it as representing the organisation of which human society is even in its present stage capable. The Soviet Union has not by any means succeeded in throwing off the incubus of traditional civilisation. It



is at war with it. Its experiment is conducted under the gigantic handicap of a co-existent anarchy which neglects no means of handicapping it. Lenin held that the experiment was impossible unless it were carried out by the combined and united efforts of the human race. The policy which Stalin has initiated is not fundamentally at variance with that view. The feverish efforts of the Piatiletka, or Five Year Plan, to match and outdo the mechanised power of production of industrial capitalism is as much dictated by the necessity of war against traditional civilisation as any agitation to bring about world revolution. One may doubt the mechanistic idol borrowed from American capitalistic individualism. It is part of the struggle, not of the development and organisation of a new society.

The success or failure of the Soviet experiment in social organisation is, however, but a fraction of the momentous fact with which the Soviet Union confronts the world. More than the foundations of the social structure has become shifted : the foundations of its values have been transformed. No social fact or act can any longer plausibly justify itself

by appeal to the categorical authority of tradition. It must justify itself in terms of social and rational grounds. It is said that the rigid despotism of present Soviet rule has established a new orthodoxy, a new dogmatic authority, a new tradition which requires conformity to Marxian dogma. The intellectual intolerance and tyranny of the Soviet régime are denounced no less than its tyranny and intolerance toward social anarchy and social crime. Professor Pavlov gives loud expression, both in public and in private, to his detestation of the infamous principles of Soviet rule. Were he privileged to profess in one of the magnificent educational institutions of free America, and did he pour the like stream of abuse on the Constitution and Government of the United States, his chances of retaining his post would be slender, and worse than dismissal might befall him. The intolerant and tyrannical Soviet government, however, replies to Professor Pavlov's vituperations by lavishing upon him, regardless of cost, every endowment and equipment he may desire, and by treating him with reverent honour and consideration. Assuming, however,

the veracious character so conspicuous in all charges brought against the Soviet Government, it is difficult to see how that intolerance could be avoided while yet the Soviets are in strife with a traditional civilisation at bay. But even if the charge be as true as detractors would have it, there is an abyss of difference, an abyss as yet unfathomed by traditional intelligence, between any brand of rational social or other theory and an appeal to categorical imperatives and traditional authority. In all traditional civilisations the final appeal has hitherto been to such authoritarian categorical values. The final appeal of nationalistic patriotism has been to its intrinsic value, its goodness, unjustified, unrationalised, indisputable, indiscussible, categorical. The final appeal of all ethics has been in like manner to transcendental, established, indisputable, categorical values. The final appeal of individualism, of individual ownership of social necessities has been similarly a categorical appeal to traditional authority, to established order so-called, even though every effort has been made to disguise the authoritarian appeal under the garb of a falsified

history which traces the authority of tradition to irremediable characters of human nature, of economic law. The principle of traditional authority, lying at the very basis of Western civilisation in its religious tradition pervades every one of its judgments, cannot be eliminated from any, whatsoever scientific or pragmatic disguise it may assume.

It is that foundation which has dropped, in Soviet society, out of the mental structure of humanity. Whatever the rigour of conformity to any set of opinions which may in the emergency of constructive strife be demanded, those opinions do not claim to derive their authority from a transcendental, categorical, irrational source. They violently repudiate such an authority. Such an authority does not exist within the sphere of the new order. The necessity of decisive and concerted action may require strict adhesion to sharply defined opinions. It may not be in a position to tolerate deviations which would stultify decisive and concerted action. The opinions acted upon may be erroneous. But they do not, nor do they profess to, nor can they appeal to traditional authority. Argument may, in the existing

emergency, be suppressed as it is suppressed on a field of battle when once a plan has been formed in the council of war, but it is in the name of rational argument, not in the name of categorical authority that the very conformity is demanded. Between that foundation and all traditional civilisation lies a gulf, the gulf between social order and the predatory anarchy that has evolved out of savagery, has never attempted social organisation, and has crippled the human mind.

Should the Soviet experiment in social organisation collapse to-morrow, should the instruments of destruction of Western civilisation and the fiendish semi-savages which it is setting at the throat of the Soviet Republics wreck it, its essential work will have been done. A generation shall have grown up on this earth to whom the myths of primitive savagery, the impostures of ancient barbarism upon which man's world has hitherto rested shall be strange, exotic, unintelligible hallucinations. For a whole people the fictitious categories, the counterfeit sentiments and values which have served as the currency of human thought since its dim infancy shall have for evermore become

impossible counters of the mind. Economic experiments may be wrecked, heroism may be crushed ; the mind of a people that has known freedom from the tyranny of traditional impostures can never again be crushed under its incubus. It is not a new economic system or a new social order which is being forged and which menaces traditional civilisation. It is a new humanity.

## CHAPTER XIV

# THE NEW HUMANITY

WHAT IS AT STAKE in the present crisis of human history is far more than the end of the cycle of Western civilisation. It is traditional civilisation itself, the framework and mechanism of the human world, which has remained unchanged through some seven thousand years, which is passing into limbo. It is a phase in the evolution of humanity rather than a chapter in history which is closing. For, whatever the social structure which shall rise out of the ruins, it cannot be one more traditional civilisation.

The normal process by which all human things are handed down from generation to generation will continue. The future will build upon the experience and knowledge accumulated by the past. Human tradition will be enlarged and enriched. But never again can mankind build upon the sanctified authority of a categorical tradition. New traditions, it is irrelevantly remarked, will be built up. Their title to authority cannot, however, be founded

upon tradition. They will be under the necessity of producing title-deeds. And the human mind can no longer accept the title-deeds of traditional authority.

It was commonly said in the nineteenth century that the authority of science was about to supplant the authority of religion. The crippled thought of the present era contrasts the capitalistic organisation (so-called) of society (so-called) with socialistic or communistic organisations in the same manner as the Victorians contrasted the authority of science with the authority of religion. Such estimates, possible only to generations which are accustomed to the obliteration of the criteria of valid thought, assume that the contrasted terms belong to equal categories and stand upon the same plane. The authority of science can, of course, never be a traditional authority. Its only validity lies in its power of continual adaptation to the criteria of intelligence. The structure of Western civilisation is not a social organisation, and cannot therefore be compared with any form of social organisation. A new tradition cannot be founded upon the authority of tradition. That authority no



longer possesses any validity for the human mind. Even in its most overt form it is to-day compelled to seek the disguises of professedly valid thought. Much less can any new authority found itself upon other grounds. Henceforth and for evermore no authority can offer to the human mind any other title-deeds. In the life-and-death struggle which the new order will have to wage against the last desperate survivals of traditional civilisation, authority will inevitably be intolerant, intolerant of traditional authority and of all the subterfuges of traditional authority. It must needs be ruthlessly and uncompromisingly intolerant and dictatorial. To be so is no more equivalent to claiming the authority of tradition than to be uncompromisingly scientific is to be dogmatic. All such disputes concerning new authorities, new organisations, new dogmatisms, new traditions are but the sophistic squirmings and writhings of the traditional mind in the last desperate struggles of its agony.

It is traditional civilisation which is passing away in those death-struggles. And not traditional civilisation alone, but the traditional mind. That crippled and deformed product of

traditional civilisation is about to become no longer possible.

A fancy with which, since Nietzsche, modern thought has frequently toyed is that of a new species of man that shall arise out of present humanity and surpass it in power and intelligence. The human race having proved itself irremediably and hopelessly foolish, incapable of manifesting the simplest collective common sense or aptitude for rational organisation, the only hope, it is thought, lies in its being superseded by a new race, or in its developing into one more fitted to adapt itself to the facts of social life. The failure of traditional civilisation has, by a natural error, been identified with the failure of the human race. The fancy of a new and more efficient humanity is superficially in accordance with the theory of organic evolution which teaches that races are subject to constant change and that characters which are inadapted to the conditions of existence are eliminated and supplanted by more efficient dispositions. \*

The whole notion of the superman rests, however, upon fundamental misapprehensions, psychological, historical, biological. Changes

and advances in the powers of the human mind are not due to organic evolution, because those powers are not transmitted by heredity, but by tradition. The inadaptations of social humanity are not due to the perversity and natural stupidity of human nature, but to conditions artificially imposed upon it. Organic evolution does not operate on individual human organisms in the same manner as on animals. It may and does bring about organic changes, such as the decay of the sense organs, of teeth, and the like structural modifications. But the conditions of social humanity do not permit of an adaptive transformation by the method of natural selection. Mental characters are the result of social educational factors, not of biological processes.

But the passing of traditional civilisation implies a transformation in the mental characters of human beings beside which the imaginary conception of a race of supermen pales into insignificance.

The chaos of irreconcilable opinions which characterises the mind of modern humanity and is growing ever more pronounced, is not the effect of natural conditions. Far from it. It

A general view of the Kremlin and Moscow river





is the effect of desperate conflicts of interests. The life-and-death struggle to maintain traditional civilisation in defiance of reason is chiefly waged by the employment of every means that fear-driven ingenuity can devise to guard the authority of tradition. From the time when, almost in its cradle, the infant is seized upon by vested interests the human mind is shaped by powers organised to that end. The very distinctions, the very criteria differentiating traditional authority from grounds for opinion are obliterated.

Such being the condition to which the mind of modern man is reduced, he is in most instances not even able to comprehend what is implied by the elimination of traditional authority. All manner of foolish and irrelevant questions and remarks may be expected when such an eventuality is contemplated. The accumulated wealth of experience, of ascertained knowledge, of clarified wisdom, of reason, of analysis, of mental power is one thing. The "respectability" and validity of opinions not founded upon accumulated experience, knowledge, wisdom, but on the authority of tradition is another. The human

mind will probably be always prone to be deflected by prejudice. But the unavoidable personal equations which must deflect all judgment are one thing ; prejudices resulting from the interests of ruling powers whose capacity to exist depends on the laborious cultivation of those prejudices are another. What is termed reason is the product of a long organic evolution governed by the functional necessity of living organisms to behave in accordance with the actual facts of their environment. The normal operation and function of human reason is therefore in the direction of securing that correspondence between thought and fact. That is its natural disposition, its physiological mechanism. The derangement of the normal mechanism by the desire that fact and thought shall correspond to wish is in some measure the effect of the range of human thought, which transcends the limits of experience. But the intrinsic defect, conspicuous in rude primitive thought when that experience is limited, becomes almost entirely corrected by the extension of experience available to modern man. The deflection of judgment, the fierce prejudices,

the paralogsms of thought in the modern world are only to an infinitesimal degree the outcome of natural defects of the human mind. They are the result of prejudices created and inculcated artificially and of the equally artificial obliteration of criteria and standards. The fallibility of reason has been emphasised with disproportionate insistence in civilisations committed to substituting for it the authority of tradition. Strictly speaking, the processes of reason are not fallible, for it is always possible to distinguish between a valid and an invalid conclusion, and it is always possible to recognise ignorance where knowledge has not been attained. But the raging conflicts of prejudice and opinion have little to do with those fine adjustments between thought and fact. They have to do with very coarse and gross maladjustments which are no part of the mechanism of the human mind, but are pathological and purely artificial deformities imposed upon it by social action.

Feminists stress the view that most of the sexual characters of women are cultural products rather than natural sexual differences. Much of what appears to be the mental



inferiority of women, is, according to that view, the effect of the education to which they have for ages been subjected and of the general influence exercised upon their minds by the traditional assumptions of their social environment. It is held that the mind of woman cannot be adequately judged by its present condition, that it is an artificial product, warped, distorted, and deformed beyond recognition by traditional influences, and that it would be entirely different from what it is could it develop under rational conditions free from those traditional influences.

What is the measure of truth in those views, how much is cultural and how much is biological in psychic sexual differences it is extremely difficult to determine. But that the view stressed by feminists is in a very large measure true is beyond doubt.

The same reasoning which is applied by feminists to account for the peculiarities and deficiencies of the minds of women applies equally, indeed in a far larger measure, to the human mind in general. It is a product of tradition. It has hitherto been the product of a tradition which has retained, cultivated, and

striven by every means to maintain irrationalities, barbarisms, savageries handed down from the crudest phases. It has been the product of a tradition which has claimed authority as such, which has maintained itself by every device and subterfuge calculated to defeat the operation of the natural dispositions of the mind. It has been the product of a tradition which has exercised its utmost influence to obliterate the criteria of valid mental operations and has set up standards which are in fact equivalent to dementia, imbecility, and emotional disorder.

Can it be for a moment doubted that the human mind, whether average or exceptional, has been warped and wilted by those conditions? Can it be doubted that were those conditions removed it would reveal itself as wholly different?

With the removal of that artificial social violence the operation of the human mind will revert to its function. That normal function is so uniform and so effective that it has brought about enormous advance in power despite the desperate efforts to check and combat it. The natural tendency of thought is to

operate similarly in all human beings, to draw from the same premises of experience similar conclusions. The conflicts of opposing opinions, the controversies of modern thought waged with fanatical passion, are as gratuitously opposed to the natural workings of human minds as are the wars of extermination waged by civilised nations. Those conflicts which stultify the mind of mankind, which reduce reason and evidence to impotence, are artificial disorders.

With the self-inflicted death of traditional civilisation the causes of that conflict and confusion will no longer exist. Opinions resting upon the authority of tradition will not enjoy an influence ostensibly equal and effectively superior to the influence of opinions founded on real grounds. The forces of civilisation will no longer be mobilised in defence of imaginary criteria of thought and for the circumvention of the normal functions of the mind. Prejudices will no longer be backed by the fanatical ruthlessness of interests at bay against reason. The human mind will operate normally, will not be deflected by predatory interests, will use the accumulated power

handed down by the tradition of human experience, of knowledge, of disciplined intelligence.

That is not a Utopia. It is not a fantastic vision of a new race that shall surpass humanity. It is not a dream of the Superman. It is the result that must logically follow from the passing away of those factors which have crippled the human mind and from the abolition of conflicts of interests in a civilisation founded upon them and committed to put down the natural functions of the mind.

But the logical consequences of such changed conditions amount in fact to the rise of a race of supermen. Mankind is, under existing conditions, mentally crippled, deformed, disabled. It is incapacitated from using its mental powers. They are effectively put out of action by prepotent and multiform agencies. The disablement does not consist merely in the inculcation of false opinions, of false information, of false mental contents. The very springs of the functional mechanism, the criteria of judgment, the motives of intellectual honesty are so tampered with as to be put out of action. There is no depth of imbecility which, in

existing conditions, cannot pass as respectable opinion. A glance at the columns of any newspaper will reveal in abundance manifestations of the human mind which belong properly to the province of the alienist, and which would be impossible were not the rudiments of mental sanity deliberately suppressed.

The affective and emotional aspects are subjected to deformation no less profound than the mechanism of thought. Under existing conditions, humanity appears vile. Brutal egoism, cruelty, duplicity, hypocrisy, criminal unscrupulousness are the traits which stand out in collective and average social behaviour. Yet they are not traits of normal human behaviour. In every situation where human beings are withdrawn from the fear-driven individualistic struggle they exhibit entirely different dispositions. They become tender-hearted, humane, sincere, affectionate. The mental deformity which causes mankind to appear vile and imbecile is the effect of the conditions of traditional civilisation.

Man, as studied by the modern psychologist, philosopher, and general provider of thought, is a pathological specimen. It is not to man

that the judgments and theories of the said psychologists, philosophers, and thinkers apply, but to the product of traditional civilisation. As well might a naturalist investigate the nature of birds by devoting himself to the study of Strassburg geese. The jargon of modern psychology applies to the unfortunate inmate of an insane asylum, an asylum to which he has been admitted as a fairly sane and normal animal, but in which all the resources of civilisation have been lavished upon the task of converting him into a raving lunatic.

The mere removal of those conditions would transform a puny race of crippled mental and moral cretins into a different species. When the process which has poisoned intelligence at its source shall have been arrested, no limit can be set to the transformation which the mind will undergo and to the multiplication of its powers.

The human mind, which is currently assumed by our psychologists and philosophical thinkers to be constitutionally irrational and imbecile, daily performs miracles of sagacity whensoever it has the opportunity of operating independently of socially inculcated prejudices.

It then harnesses the physical forces, it creates mechanical devices which dwarf the fairytales of religious thaumaturgists. Little is heard of the natural and irremediable fallibility of reason in connection with the devising of electric light, of X-rays, of radio telegraphy and television, of aeronautics. Little is heard of the jargon about the liberty and respectability of sincere opinions, the virtue of toleration, the merits of compromise where the activities of the engineer and technician are concerned. The sceptical, pessimistic, cynical and despairing jargon applies only where the interests of traditional institutions and of anarchic predatory individualism are concerned, where the laboriously inculcated and cultivated prejudices of traditional control of thought have free play. There is not the slightest ground for supposing that man, who is normally sagacious and ingenious in the one sphere is constitutionally a cretin in the other. He is normally rational and sagacious where he has not been artificially converted into a cretin. There is no reason why he should not be normally rational and sagacious when elaborate steps to bring about his artificial stupefaction shall no longer be taken.

When traditional civilisation shall have crumbled down, an opportunity will for the first time be afforded for the re-education as well as for the organisation of mankind. It will probably require several generations to obliterate the vestiges of the crippling influence exercised by traditional civilisation. I have heard persons whose minds have from their infancy been poisoned with every traditional prejudice, whose mature efforts are baffled by the ruthless censorship of Western civilisation, who are gagged into silent despair—I have heard such persons flare up with righteous indignation against the tyranny which, according to their doubtful information, is being exercised over education in Soviet Russia. The very classics of Russian literature are, if we believe that doubtful information, actually adapted and expurgated for the use of the rising generation. Was ever such intolerant tyranny heard of! For my part the moderation of the alleged Russian procedure appears somewhat dangerous. The whole of Western literature, whose every phrase, every word, and every implication is saturated with the insane and immoral premises of traditional civilisation should, for



a period, be withheld entirely from the new humanity. The mind of the human race should be allowed time to recover. It should for once be aseptically protected against the virus that has hitherto poisoned one generation after another. When the new race shall have completely eliminated from its system the poisonous infection it may safely gratify its curiosity concerning the thought, the sentiments, the literature of a diseased race. It will do so in much the same manner as present generations may enjoy the genius and the eloquence of Milton if they succeed in overcoming the tedium inevitably caused by the fantastic forms of the puerile world in which the mind of the great revolutionist moved. The naïvely undisputed sentiments, the paltry transparent sophistry of existing culture, reflected in every phrase of its literature, may then be perused with the same tolerant immunity with which are read to-day the pedantic discourses of Milton's God or the grandiloquent descriptions of artillery duels in his Heaven.

No liberation of mankind from the intolerable evils of traditional civilisation in its so-called economic, political, social, ethical aspects

is possible while the human mind itself is paralysed and stultified.

In this confused age many who look eagerly to that liberation and passionately cry for justice think that it can be compassed independently of the mind's recovery. They dream of compromises, of partial amendments and reform. They would lay aside the authority of tradition in the constitution of the social world, and would retain it in the mind of man. Such confusion of thought is inevitable while all thought is confused, darkened, rendered compassless by the wreck and ruin wrought upon it. But if human thought can do aught to assist the redemption of mankind, and its rebirth after the passing of traditional civilisation, it must forestall the transmutation which that dissolution will occasion. The thought that counts must be the thought of normal minds, unbrow-beaten by authority.

He whose mind is but able to fulfil its normal function, and does not operate by way of figments forcibly thrust upon it, is, in truth, a member of another race. Nor is he readily permitted to forget it. The malice, the folly, the patronage of the Lilliputian cripples who

swarm about him from various remote epochs of the past see to it that he shall not forget that he is a stranger. They deem themselves his equals, or even his superiors. But between them and him lies a gulf deeper than those of race or nation, the gulf between traditional humanity and the new humanity. Yet the humanity to which every thinker belongs shall at no distant date people the earth. To create it will require exactly one generation, though it may take longer for the present race of malicious maniacs to die out and to cease poisoning the air. To bring into being supermen nothing is needed but to put a stop to the mendacities which afford impunity to a traditional barbarism which terms itself civilisation.

## CHAPTER XV

# MANNERS, CULTURE, AND CIVILISATION

THE TERM “civilisation” has been used in the present work in a social rather than a cultural sense, for the state called civilisation has invariably been a very definite social structure, namely, a stratification of mankind into power-holding and servile classes. The cultural growths which the term civilisation is more commonly understood to connote have hitherto been dependent upon that structure. Like the power of ancient theocratic rulers to create the art, the luxury, the science, the literature, the thought which constitute such civilisations as those of the ancient East, so the achievements which stand to the credit of capitalistic, industrial civilisation, the creations of applied science and industry, the inventions of the mechanical age, its luxuries, its culture are the fruit of privileged power commanding the resources of labour. Civilisation in the cultural sense of the term is the fruit of injustice, is the product of

what constitutes at the same time the impossibility of its permanency, the inevitability of its decay, the anti-social, anti-moral, criminal nature of its structure.

Modern humanity revolts against the anti-social, anti-moral, and criminal character of traditional civilisation. Its intelligence is outraged by the falsifications which pervade all the thought to which an anti-social and immoral civilisation must have recourse in order to maintain itself. But with those characters which excite loathing and indignation is intermixed all that is of value in the human heritage. The good and the evil are transmitted together in tradition. Traditional civilisation is perishing as the result of its anti-social character, of the falsification of its thought and knowledge. But it has been the creator of all human achievement, it has brought into being the multiplied powers which set civilised man above the savage. Those achievements are the direct fruit of the very structure which condemns traditional civilisation. Modern intelligence revolts against the evil and would retain the good, condemns the structure and prizes its products. It is embattled against the

traditional civilisation which has arisen out of savagery, but it does not desire to return to savagery.

The most perplexing constructive problem which confronts the human race is the solution of that dilemma. Can the powers developed by the division of mankind into masters and slaves be maintained while that division is abolished ?

The doubts and uncertainties which beset the question are, it must be borne in mind, magnified by every factor which preserves the structure and by fear of the untried and unknown. A civilisation that is not founded upon that stratification, that is not founded upon the authority of tradition is a world as yet unexplored. It is a humanity transmuted, not in the mere externals of social structure but in its very mentality.

Although such a transmutation constitutes more than a new stage of development, for it almost amounts to a biological transformation, the past development of mankind offers a remote parallel. The very civilisation which is now in the last phases of its agony arose out of a somewhat similar, though more limited,

transformation. During thousands of years traditional civilisation had been represented by absolute theocratic empires. The priest-king had reigned supreme. The master-class, the class enjoying leisure and power had been the class of priests. The elements of that material and mental culture which constitutes the fruit of civilisation were brought forth by the priestly civilisations of the Near East, in Babylon, in Egypt. The profound falsification of all thought which inevitably marked such priestly civilisations caused them to suffer from the first that decrepitude which is the ultimate fate of all traditional civilisations. Their cultural creative power was sterilised almost as soon as it awakened. For thousands of years civilisation had meant that sterile, paralysed priestly world incapable of development. Western civilisation arose when the fruits of those archaic priestly cultures were taken over by a people whose social structure was different. Western civilisation arose among the Greeks. They too had grown out of savagery, they too were divided into masters and slaves. But the masters were not priests, the slaves were not the people. The people were warring tribesmen, still savage

enough to have preserved primitive savage equalitarianism. The slaves were chattel. Greek civilisation was the first unpriestly civilisation in history. It was full of traditional authorities which the existing state of culture, of experience, of knowledge did not afford the means of discerning. But it did not honour the authority of a priestly tradition. It sought for the first time valid grounds of opinion and of thought outside the authority of tradition. The result was a transmutation of the human mind, a transmutation not incomparable with the emergence of civilised man out of savagery, nay, with the emergence of savage man out of animality. It is by that transmutation that the first Western civilisation was brought into being. It decayed and fell because the priest regained his power over it, because the authority of his tradition was re-established in the second Western civilisation. But the legacy of the first European civilisation, its rejection of priestly authority and tradition could not be wholly obliterated. That legated power has struggled for centuries against the priest and his tradition, it has created, in spite of him, the achievements of Western civilisation.



The transmutation which is foreshadowed by the passing of that civilisation, although effected under conditions of immeasurably extended powers, is similar in character to that which first enabled the Western world to rise out of the archaic East. It holds the promise of an extension of the powers of the human mind exceeding the expansion which brought the European mind into being.

The fear which chiefly haunts modern men and women in the presence of the change is that the substitution of social organisation for predatory class rule will abolish the individual leisure and privileged emancipation from labour which has been the source of creative civilisation. If by leisure be meant complete elimination of socially valuable activity, the fear is justified. But is the loss a fitting ground for regret? Is the strife of the entirely leisured against boredom and mental vacuity worth perpetuating?

The current assumption that social organisation implies more labour and less leisure is not logically justified. Not only have the predatory individualistic conditions of traditional

civilisation resulted in enormous over-production, that is, wasted labour, but a gigantic proportion of that production is applied to purposes which are in the highest degree anti-social. Four-fifths of the world's wealth is at present expended on armaments. An estimate of the proportion of labour which is wasted, or positively injurious to all concerned, would be startling. The assumption that more labour would be required to maintain a socially organised world than to maintain a disorganised one is grotesque. Less than half the labour which is employed to-day in maintaining the world in misery could maintain it in luxury.

There is little danger that the mental transmutation of humanity will lead to a lessened appreciation of the uses of leisure. Leisure will be increased. Instead of being the privilege of the few, it will be an extended element in the life of all. Desire for the enjoyment of life which is the ultimate aim of all labour will become keener and more intelligent. The demand for the products of leisure will become greater, not less.

Civilisation has subtler implications than  
QB

either the social or concrete cultural connotations of the term. It means not only the adaptation of society to culture. It means the adaptation of culture to social life. Anti-social individualism is the reverse of both those adaptations. The old aristocratic civilisations developed exalted types of man because they were not wholly individualistic. They depended not so much on individual as on class power. Class solidarity was accordingly strengthened within the ruling class. Capitalistic democracy has supplanted aristocratic class rule. The rulers of capitalistic society are no longer a sharply defined class. Predatory exploitation, which in aristocratic societies was the privilege of a class, is no longer such in capitalistic democracy. It is open to all. The exploited labourer may become a predatory exploiter. Sheer individualism has become monstrously magnified. It is each for himself. The class solidarity which gave rise to the aristocratic type, its *esprit de corps*, its regard and consideration for its peers is abolished by capitalistic democracy. The aristocratic type of civilised man has consequently given place to the vulgarian type. Individualistic self-assertion, aggressive

complacency irrespective of whether it be well or ill founded—in short, bad manners, have converted aristocratic civilisation into vulgarian civilisation. People of Latin culture whose habitual manners bear the charm of a traditional courtesy, people of English culture who are characterised by a good-natured dignity are almost instantly transformed on becoming citizens of the great American democracy. Their whole manner, their speech, their voice, their gait and method of perambulation, their very faces become at once adapted to proclaiming aggressively and blatantly the fact that they are as good as anyone else and that they don't care who knows it. Is this a manifestation of enhanced self-respect, of heightened consciousness of independence? Not at all. It is the natural outcome and expression of the fact that they are members of a social structure in which the existence of every individual depends upon his power to fight every other and, if possible, to trample him down. It is not the expression of democratic liberty, but of individualism. It is not the outcome of enhanced social freedom, but quite on the contrary, of the disintegration

of social solidarity. Civilised manners are the product of that solidarity. They have hitherto been the product of class solidarity. Civilised manners have, with that disintegration of class solidarity by individualistic democracy, become converted into vulgarian manners. But that is not the result of advance in social organisation, but of advance in social disintegration. The effect of social organisation, of social solidarity is the exact opposite. It should result in manners considerably more civilised than the civilised manners which have hitherto been the outcome of the limited solidarity of a class.

Civilised manners, the form of self-respect which manifests itself in respect and consideration for others, which does not rely upon aggressive insolence, arrogance, brow-beating—the individualistic means of self-assertion of the consciously inferior—are one aspect of that subtler connotation of the term “civilisation,” which transcends its more concrete cultural meanings. But it is, in reality, one with those cultural aspects. The tastes, that is, the values of life, of the individualistic vulgarian who is concerned with blatantly denying his

inferiority, correspond to his manners. Individualistic civilisation is vulgar, is fundamentally uncivilised, because individualistic interests are the antithesis of cultural interests. The latter consist in caring for things, for people, for ideas, for joys, on their own account, for their own sakes. In very much the same manner as predatory individualism does not produce things for their own sake, but for the sake of profits, so vulgarian individualism is incapable of rejoicing in things for their own sake. It subordinates every form of gratification to the display of that gratification to itself and to others. Its pleasures are a form of the violent assertion of its success. They are either merely ostentatious and expensive or are dependent upon external suggestion. The vulgarian is not so much anxious to enjoy himself as to persuade himself and others that he is enjoying himself. He may be seen trying to be gay, trying to be drunk, trying to be dissipated. He seldom succeeds in genuinely enjoying himself, because he has lost the faculty of forgetting himself in things—which is the essence of culture. He has lost the power of valuing things. Therein consists vulgarity, therein consists

individualistic democracy's lack of civilisation, and no amount of feverish search for culture and endowed institutions for its promotion can remedy the deficiency.

Those are not the conditions of an organised society. They are the conditions of an unorganised individualism, of a disintegration of society. No civilisation has hitherto been socially organised. But that is not equivalent to saying that no social organisation can be civilised. Social organisation should, on the contrary, logically lead to a vast extension of that social solidarity which has been the basis of the highest types of civilised man and civilised culture.

11

## CHAPTER XVI

# INDIVIDUALISM

AS WITH MOST WORDS which are instinct with passionate controversial social values, the term "individualism," as currently employed, makes capital out of the ambiguities of a double meaning. When what is termed an individualistic social organisation is contrasted with a socialistic organisation, the reference is to economic individualism. It signifies the licence granted to every individual to pursue his own profit, his material economic profit, without reference to the profit of others. Economic individualism, which has that very definite connotation, is, however, tacitly assimilated in the apologies of individualistic society to individualism in general, and made to suggest, for instance, freedom of individual mental development, of opinions, of choice. The suggestion belongs to that common class of dialectic fallacies, or tricks of fraudulent argument, which passes without warning from a term used in one sense to a totally different use and connotation of the term.



The economic individualism of modern civilisation is the result of industrial and commercial conditions. That it is the result of noble principles of democratic equality is one of the fictions of the mythology of civilisation. The older means and forms of ruling power were ponderous and more or less permanent, and the classes exercising that power were accordingly of the nature of established castes, between the members of which there existed a strong bond of solidarity. Latifundists and feudal landowners might commonly be destitute of cash. Money did not acquire paramount importance as the concrete source of power until the rise of industrial conditions. Power represented by, and dependent on, fluid, circulating money can no longer be the appanage of an exclusive and permanently differentiated class, although those who hold power and those who don't are, of course, as sharply differentiated. The now more or less legendary "infinite opportunities" of America, the street-waif in whom is a potential millionaire or President, are not products of noble democratic and liberal principles, but of the economic conditions of industrialism and

commercialism, of what is termed the capitalistic system.

The problem presented by all social organisation, the relation of the individual to the whole, has thus acquired a prominence which it did not possess in pre-industrial societies. The mere physical aggregation of individuals does not constitute a society. In order to be that, the activities of constituent individuals, their behaviour, aims, purposes and desires must correspond in some degree to those of the social whole. There is nothing in the mere fact of that correspondence which detracts or subtracts from any aspect or element of individuality, except the economic. The fiction of a substantive "individuality" is a psychological fable derived from the savage superstition of a shadow-soul and its mediæval metaphysical progeny, a self-determining and unconditioned "ego." The human conscious mind is, under any aggregate conditions, whether social or anti-social, a social product, collectively determined. Isolated individual man is a dumb, unthinking, stark brute beast. He is not human. The mind of modern man is what it is by virtue of transmitted and imparted tradition and

social reactions. It does not differ from that of the Stone-Age savage by virtue of any change in an unconditioned ego, in a substantive individuality, but by virtue of the accumulated wealth of transmitted tradition. It is a social product of his age. That holds good equally of a socialised or anti-socialised aggregate, of an organised or of an anarchic whole. The only differences are those determined by economic power.

The effect of industrialised capitalistic society on the non-economic aspects of the individual nowise differs in character from any other form of domination. The human mind is subordinated in the one case as in the other to the dominant interests. Subordination to pecuniary interests is baser in its effects than subordination to older forms of dominant power, such as that of an hereditary landed aristocracy. It is nearer to the savage level of brutal material interests. Mental standardisation by industrial and commercial interests is on a considerably lower level than mental standardisation by aristocratic interests. But the mind is in each case crippled and distorted by the subordination of its operation to a dominating interest

which demands the falsification of intelligence and its emotional springs. What is meant and intended by individualism is in fact that very situation, the anti-social activity of the individual.

The individual is made an individual by his being cast into the midst of a mob of individuals. In that situation his individuality undergoes a marvellous growth. The growth of individuality is the pride of traditional civilisation. Prior to that situation the individual's individualism is vague and undefined. An individual who is unaware of any conflict between his immediate interests and social interests, an individual who is amoral, is not fully aware of his individuality. That individuality is as yet very vague.

The biologist is sorely perplexed at times to define it. Is the cell, or the organ, or the organism an individual? In certain strange conglomerates of diversified sea-creatures, linked like Siamese twins by living stalks, which yet act, swim, dive with a finely concerted co-ordination, which is the individual, the single organism or the conglomerate? Elsewhere the biologist discovers that he can create a dozen

individuals out of one by merely snipping with scissors. To define the individual becomes for the biologist a matter of linguistic convenience and convention.

The psychologist is prone to become no less perplexed. An individual behaves. Wherefore does he behave? Obviously in view of his own profit, his good, in obedience to certain urges of self-preservation, of self-aggrandisement, if you will. But, lo and behold, half the individual's behaviour is frantically directed against his own profit, against his self-aggrandisement, against his very preservation. He courts danger and death, not for the preservation of the individual, but of the race. And that insane motive swamps out all others. The individual, whenever he takes a holiday from the business of aggrandising and preserving himself, and sets about doing "what he likes," at once begins to behave in a manner which has no apparent reference to his preservation or aggrandisement. In a predatory civilisation which has achieved such a splendid development of individualism, which has done everything possible to concentrate, by means of panic fear, the attention of the individual on preserving

himself and securing his profit, that individual is concerned with nothing more than with cashing his profit, and exchanging it for "what he likes." The most degraded vulgarian individual is as much concerned with spending his cash as with obtaining it. And his manner of doing so, his manner of doing "what he likes," is strangely irrelevant. Be his pleasure what it may, alcoholic intoxication, brutalised fornication, the commercialised romance of the cinema or of literary pandering, that pleasure is uneconomic and transcends his individual profit, aggrandisement, protection, or individualistic interest. Why are economic values accounted drab and sordid? Why are they the antithesis of the æsthetic values of life, of hedonism, of art? Because, strangely enough, when the individual is intent on doing "what he likes," he altogether neglects his individualistic interests. He deliberately sets aside his individualism, and indulges in delights which are shockingly unindividualistic. "What he likes" is the very opposite of his individualistic interests. As with the stag that starves himself to the verge of exhaustion during the season of it, the individual is governed by urges which

transcend individualistic values. Clearly the individual has only an imperfect appreciation of his individuality, of the supreme virtue of individualism.

The anthropologist who can afford to divert his attention from the passionate defence of traditional civilisation, and can turn to the facts of uncivilised society, has occasion to be still more surprised. In truth the proud claim of traditional civilised society that it has imparted a new importance to the individual, that it has magnified his individuality, his proud upholding of his good and truth, is amply substantiated. The individual, in societies which have not yet become civilised into herds of bandits and despoiled, enjoys little of that proud, self-conscious individualism which is the boast of traditional civilisation. And how should he? In the rude and simple conditions of uncivilised society the desperate conflicts of interests which dominate the civilised individual are not apparent. Good and evil bear a somewhat different complexion. The good accruing to the individual hunter from eating the whole of the bison he has slaughtered, which is his property, and seeing to it that other

individuals shall not snatch a portion from him, is not clear. To his dull, uncivilised mind, another good is much clearer. Were he to eat the whole bison himself, who would assist him in procuring another? Were he to insist upon the sacred rights of his private property, are not the chances that, in addition to getting for himself a severe attack of indigestion, he would have to starve the next week, when some other individual, and not he, slaughters a bison? Manifestly, so at least it appears to the dull savage mind, the sacred rights of private property cannot profit him. His good, his profit, his interest is that the whole clan, hunting amicably together, should slaughter as many bison as possible, and share out. Not only is that good, a sublime ethical ideal, but it is the only way for the poor individual savage to escape starvation. Private property is impossible, so impossible that it is evil, nay, unthinkable. Not until the poor savage becomes civilised, not until he has discovered that he can not only live from the fruitfulness of the earth by cultivating it, but that he can live even more comfortably by getting other people, wives or slaves, to cultivate it for him, does the sacredness of the



rights of private property dawn upon him. The savage who made that discovery was the founder of civilisation. The tradition which he established is the sacred tradition, the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind, which traditional civilisation acknowledges as inviolable. To criticise it or to dispute it has become an indication of perversity, has become, under the authority of tradition, the supreme perversity.

The primitive hunter who finds it inexpedient to devour a whole buffalo and to run the chance of starving is persuaded that his individual good and social good are, for all practical purposes, identical. He is a spontaneous socialist. The savage who has established his right to a piece of land and is able to obtain wives or slaves to till it, thinks he has discovered a new good. The more land he owns, the more wives or slaves he can acquire, the better a time he will have. He holds socialism to be an evil thing, land-ownership the obvious foundation of an unparalleled prosperity, and, therefore, eminently good. His slaves, those whom he has elbowed out of the land, may think differently. Values begin to be confused

and conflicting in such an incipient state of civilisation. If the conflict lay solely between the views of the landowner and the views of his slaves, we should have two opposite sets of values, a master morality and a slave morality. One might argue for the one or for the other. The master, being much better fed, enjoying much more leisure, and being much more self-confident than the slave, is a very much finer fellow. He is an aristocrat. His morality is much more enlightened. It is, besides, more successful, it actually produces more good. It may very reasonably be argued that his master morality is considerably superior to the mean, envious, ignorant, malicious, and ill-bred morality of the underfed and unsuccessful slave.

But the matter is, unfortunately, not quite so simple. There are serious drawbacks to the master morality. One is that it is perpetually at loggerheads with the slave morality, and that in the long run the latter triumphs through the revolt of the slaves, so that what the slave calls good and justice, his morality, and not the master morality, ultimately comes to be the categorical imperative. In that process,

moreover, the entire edifice of the unparalleled prosperity of the master comes tumbling about his ears. The master and his good, his master morality, turn out to have been lacking in foresight, to have been only a provisional opportunist and short-sighted morality. Its good consisted in his eating his cake, but left out of account his inability to have it after eating it. Further, his master morality has an even more pernicious effect on himself. He is, we said, a finer fellow than the slave. But, as slave morality becomes more insistent and the slave more restless, the anxieties arising from his situation prey upon the mind of the master. He is compelled to resort to all manner of subterfuges in order to cope with the situation. He is compelled, among other things, to become such an inveterate liar that his mind becomes fuddled with his own lies. In short, from being a fine fellow, he becomes increasingly decrepit, incapable, imbecile. That process is called the cycles of civilisation.

The real conflict and opposition is not the obvious one between the master morality and the slave morality, but the opposition between the supposed good of the individual master and

the good of the society of which he is a member. The question which the founding of civilisation by the savage who appropriated land and slaves raises is whether or not he was justified in his view when he set aside the view of the more primitive hunting savage that the two goods, his good and the good of society, are identical. On a short-sighted view there can be no question about the highly satisfactory character of the new individualistic good introduced by the savage founder of civilisation. On a less short-sighted view the case of his master morality is not so clear. He will have no doubt as to the good of his individual master morality as long as all goes well with him. But awful doubts may arise in his own mind when things begin, as they inevitably must, to go wrong. The worst of it is that by the time things do begin to go wrong, the master has grown so decrepit and imbecile, and is so completely befuddled with his own lies that he is scarcely even capable of an honest doubt as to his terrible miscalculation.

The identity between the good of the individual and the good of the social whole which is so clear to the rude savage hunter, becomes

obscure and confused under the complex conditions created by civilisation. Yet the relation which is obvious under social conditions reduced to their simplest expression, is, in fact, equally true under all conditions. The complexities and intricacies created by civilisation obscure, confuse, and conceal the simple relation, but they do not alter it. The individual is a social being—in a far deeper sense than he currently apprehends. He is not only a member, but a product of the social whole. Not his property alone, but his mind and his being, are integral parts of the social complex. When he creates a master morality, an individualistic good, he not only sets up a conflict with other individuals for whom his good is evil, but, by setting up that conflict, he destroys the society of which he is an integral part, destroys therefore himself, his own power of deriving profit from his individualism.

Unfortunately another element, the element of time, enters into the relation. The effects of predatory individualism take longer to operate upon society than upon the individual. The latter's profits are immediate, the retribution is delayed. It is, in fact, that discrepancy which

determines the entire contrast between individual and social good, between master morality and slave morality. It is impossible for social good to prevail so long as individualistic conditions continue profitable. It is only when retribution begins to make itself felt that master morality is effectively brought into question. And there must still be a prolonged period when the two sets of interests, the two sets of good, the individual and the social, stand in conflict. There must always be a period when predatory individualism offers profit, even though it be manifestly suicidal, when the profiting individual can say : "*Après moi, le déluge.*"

To regard the situation in terms of categorical ethical values is useless and irrelevant, because social behaviour is not determined by categorical ethical values. The profit of the individual is a social crime. The Chicago "shorter" who withholds too abundant wheat while thousands lack bread is a criminal of the same kind, though on a larger scale, than the starving man who steals a loaf from the baker and is sent to jail. The starving thief pleads irresistible temptation. The profiteering bandit

can also plead irresistible temptation. The entire apologia and defence of individualistic civilisation, every argument that has ever been advanced in justification of capitalism, reduce themselves to the plea of the thief : irresistible temptation. Predatory individualism, i.e., traditional civilisation, makes possible the luxury, power, and leisure of the individual. In the midst of that luxury, that leisure, the individualist says : " Must all this go, can all this be sacrificed ? " The argument is perfectly valid. The person who professes to despise that luxury, that fulness of life, and that leisure is either a savage or a hypocrite. When, using traditional ethical values, we say : " That leisure and that luxury are a crime, a theft, in consequence of which thousands suffer and starve," we are assuming categorical moral imperatives which are but translations of the conflicts of interests. They mean nothing so long as the ethical language is retained. The charge against the profiteer that he is a thief means exactly as much as the charge against the starving man that he is a thief. Why is the stealing of a loaf of bread a crime ? Because the law and the police make it such. Why is the

luxury of the millionaire a crime? Because traditional ethical values which have exactly as much logical validity as the law and the police make it immoral. The creation of the category of ethical values is by far the most misleading and confusing artificial distortion which the authority of tradition has imposed upon the human mind. Ethical values are simply expressions of interests. By translating those interests into absolute moral good and evil, mankind has effectually rendered itself incapable of distinguishing between good and evil.

Both the theft of a loaf by a starving man and the theft of billions of loaves by the millionaire are individualistically unimpeachable, and both are social crimes. Both are individually good—irresistible temptations—and both are socially evil. The conflict of ethics reduces itself to the conflict between individual good and social good, individual interest and social interest, and to nothing else. The conflict is not a subject for categorical evaluations or for moral indignation. It is merely a subject for social policy and social regulation. In a traditional civilisation the need for protecting the



sacred right of private property has made the stealing of a loaf of bread an offence at law punishable with imprisonment. In an organised society the millionaire's stealing of billions of loaves of bread would likewise be a social offence. Traditional civilisations are not socially organised ; their ethics are not social, but individualistic. In an organised civilisation, ethics must of necessity be social.

Organisation is, of necessity, categorical, like the old categorical imperative of ethics. An attorney who should discuss the ethics of the case at the trial of the starving thief would have his arguments ruled out as irrelevant by the court. The court is concerned with administering, not with discussing, the law. Similarly, the irresistible temptation of the millionaire to retain his fleet of automobiles, his town and country houses, his gratifying and beautiful luxury by stealing billions of loaves of bread from the community is not a subject for argument in a socially organised civilisation—or in a revolution. The unsocial character of the irresistible temptation is a matter of categorical social regulation. It is useless for the millionaire to argue, as it is useless for the starving thief

to argue. Social good must prevail over individual irresistible temptations.

Social good must prevail over individual good, social ethics over individualistic ethics because it inevitably does so in the end. It is well that it should prevail because social action has infinitely more power for good or for evil than individual action. The individual who steals a loaf of bread inflicts so inconsiderable an amount of harm upon society that to punish him at all appears barbarous and unjust. The individual who steals a billion loaves of bread inflicts a greater injury, but his individual criminal action is still inconsiderable as compared with the collective criminal action of traditional society. The society, so-called, which rests upon the individualistic morality of the thief inflicts an amount of injury, of misery and suffering which is incomputable. It inflicts such devastation that it destroys itself. The measure of the ruin, material and mental, which it causes, is such that it cannot be placed in any balance against the opportunist profit accruing to the individual. The individual's wealth, his luxury, his power cannot be weighed in the same balance.

Traditional civilisation is incomputably more criminal than any criminal individual can possibly be. On mere quantitative grounds society is therefore justified in demanding social good, social morality, social justice and in disregarding individual opportunity, individual good, transient individual profit.

The opportunist individual will, in general, not yield to ethical argument, because the ethical argument is but a disguise of interests, and he has a perfect right to defend his interests against the social interests even though he is short-sighted in doing so. But the coercion which individualistic unorganised society claims to be justified in applying to the thief of a loaf of bread, organised society is at least equally justified in applying to an individualist horde which causes incomputable misery to society. The ethics of individualistic society are imposed by coercion. The ethics of organised society cannot be imposed otherwise.

## CHAPTER XVII

# OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

THE ISSUE of the present phase in mankind's career is not a matter of doubt. The structure of civilisation as we know it, and as it has for some seven thousand years been known, is cracking. It is inevitably and irremediably collapsing. Those who fail, or profess to fail, to apprehend so patent a fact manifest a degree of intelligence which has sunk to the level of a deficiency in the sense of humour, and is becoming an object of popular merriment. The displays of asininity by economic experts, which occupy the daily columns of the papers devoted to "Signs of Returning Prosperity" are being collected by humorists.

The economic system has reached the natural limit set to its operation by the very mechanism of that operation. The means of exploitation and power created by industrial capitalism far exceeded any of which previous phases of traditional civilisations have disposed. That very efficiency has enormously accelerated the

process of dissolution. The overwhelming power and wealth of England during the nineteenth century were directly due to her being first in the field with the new instrument of individual profit. The fabulous "prosperity" and wealth of America, which enjoyed in addition vastly greater resources, was the result of a similar monopoly in the plying of a new broom. That prosperity, which consisted in the opportunity for individual fortune building, depended upon a free field of operation. Like the English and American land speculators who in virgin countries pegged out their claims or bartered a few blankets for domains, industrialist capitalists have drawn miraculous hauls from an unindustrialised world. A washer-woman who possesses the secret and monopoly of her art profits by taking in the community's washing, but to take in one another's washing is the symbol of economic futility. The miraculous hauls obtained when industrialism was a virtual monopoly of a couple of pioneer nations, and was even among them only partially developed, can no longer be drawn from an almost completely industrialised world. The age of miracles is over. Industrial civilisation,

attuned meanwhile to a scale of production and consumption which belonged to an heroic age of industrialist conquest, finds itself unable to keep house or to pay the rent.

Like all "surplus profits," the miraculous hauls were abstracted, or in plain English stolen, from the common store of mankind's food and resources. The effects of the robbery were not obtrusively conspicuous so long as the exploitation, the development of new industries and new countries, the opening up of markets was proceeding. The exploited classes of industrial countries actually appeared to share in the miraculous hauls. It was rhetorically possible to represent the system as a mutual advantage, to be promoted by the conjoined efforts of co-operating capital and labour. But abstracted wealth is ultimately abstracted from people's pockets, and the more thoroughly and efficiently pockets are cleaned out, the less is there left to abstract. Clumsy, slow, antique systems of depredation allowed time for depleted pockets to become refilled and provide renewed opportunities of depredation. Not so the splendid efficiency of modern business. Pockets have not even time to be refilled. The

world is not poorer to-day by a single penny or loaf of bread than it was at the height of capitalistic prosperity. All that it can no longer afford is dividends. The only people who are in danger of destitution are the millionaires. A world which is no longer industrially virgin cannot afford to keep them.

The maze of modern economic relations reduces itself to very crude and simple facts. And it is those crude facts, and not the frail artificial superstructure of ingenious and complex devices, which govern the process. No juggling with currencies, gold exchanges, credits, inflations and deflations, doles to distressed capitalists, no complex and ingenious process of robbing Peter to pay Paul, is of any avail in the face of the crude facts on which economic life, be it civilised or savage, ultimately rests.

The inevitable breakdown of a process of intensified and accelerated depredation has been further hastened by the World War. Hence has it become customary to regard the mishap as an accident resulting from the accident of the war. That the war was itself an effect of the system is overlooked. Nor was it an accidental effect, but the material manifestation of its

mode of operation. The system of industrial capitalism is a system of war and strife, whether nationalistic, corporate, or individual. Depredation is usually conducted at the point of a gun. That the gun occasionally goes off is an incidental detail. It is part of the procedure. The ravage caused by the war was hardly greater than the ravage caused by the system of predatory industrialism. The going off of the gun accounted for some ten million human lives ; the holding up of mankind is no less lethal. And as with all social ravages, it is impossible for the system itself to be immune from the devastation it causes. That devastation and hold-up continue. They are proceeding to bring about the same materialised effect as they brought about a few years since. No force on earth can prevent the gun from going off.

No force, no human agency. For the entire structure of predatory, capitalistic, nationalistic, Christian civilisation is not human. It is not amenable to human intelligence, or purposes, or ideals, or emotions. It is as a machine, amenable only to those human forces which have gone to constructing it. The machine, like any other, can yield only what



has been put into it. It can be operated by the crude predatory interests only which brought it into being. No machine can be made to serve any other function than that for which it was constructed. Nationalism is an engine of war. The structure of capitalistic industrialism is an engine of depredation. Nothing can deviate their operation by a fraction of an inch from the function which they were constructed to perform. The traditional civilisation whose foundations were laid by the barbarism of the Dark Ages cannot be saved by any modern development of intelligence or wisdom from the inevitable wreck towards which it is heading with accelerated speed.

No man can tell how and when the final disruption will occur. None can tell which will snap first : the nationalistic structure which is now impotently awaiting the creeping combustion of the time-fuse that shall explode it, the economic structure which is skewering up the goose which it has killed, or the mental structure of recklessness and exasperation which is seething with irrepressible revolt and indignation. The straining structure may snap to-morrow. Its agony may be prolonged. The

defensive resources of which it disposes surpass those of any domination of the past. The resistance which it is able to offer is multiplied in its death-struggles. But the magnitude of that power and of those resources tells both ways. Their marvellous development, which in the last war surprised those gallant English gentlemen who cantered into the field at the head of quaint cavalry regiments, have greatly intensified their power of self-destruction. An amazed traditional world suddenly made the discovery that the unparalleled achievements of modern civilisation had rendered war utterly dangerous and unprofitable. An amazed Western civilisation is, in like manner, now witnessing the practical demonstration of the strange fact that the unparalleled perfection of its weapons of depredation has made the business, like that of war, miserably unprofitable and highly dangerous. The triumphs of modern civilisation and the magnitude of the strain which they have set up have accelerated the rate of social change beyond all previous standards of computation, so that the history of centuries has now become crowded into less than the span of a lifetime.


As an opportune inference from its basic myth, traditional civilisation's downfall is equated with the downfall of civilisation, if not of the human species. The menace to nationalism and predatory individualistic capitalism is naïvely identified with the doom of human civilisation. That doom is pictured as a relapse into the Dark Ages. Apocalyptic visions drawn in lurid hues represent the human race reduced to destitution and reverting to bestiality. The picture is well calculated to encourage a stupefied humanity to defend predatory, nationalistic, Christian civilisation. It is scarcely less fantastically fictitious than the "Signs of Returning Prosperity" in the daily headlines of the newspapers. When, despite the unequivocal and insistent testimony of history, modern civilisation at the height of its success waived aside the cyclic law to which all others have succumbed, it justified its faith by the exceptional character of its resources. The records of accumulated knowledge and culture cannot in the age of print, as in the manuscript age, suffer obliteration. The multiplied and diffused achievements of material and mental culture are secure as they never were in any previous age. At the

present time when there is not a single aspect of the structure of Western civilisation which is not directly imperilled, there does not exist the faintest indication of any menace to the security of the achieved products of human intelligence. The only menace to its continued productiveness lies, not in the decay, but in the continuance of the strangling and deteriorating domination of entrenched predatory and uncivilised interests. The latter, not civilisation's achievements, are menaced.

Doubtless the liberation of human power and achievement from the toils that jeopardise their development will not be effected without a desperate and appalling struggle. Would that the hollow fantasies of liberal thought were not intrinsic absurdities ! Would that the intelligent perception of the inexorable facts of the crucial situation could influence the effecting of the change which is inevitable, and that it could be effected peacefully. But to contemplate such a desirable possibility is a delusion. And to entertain that alluring delusion would, at the present time, but add immeasurably to the fierceness of the struggle, and protract it.

Whatever its immediate occasion or the form

it may take, it will be a final trial of power between the two forces which everywhere stand confronting one another in the modern world. International politics, that is to say, manœuvres for strategic position, defence and attack, have had but one sole ultimate object in view since the rise of Soviet power. Whether in the Far East or in Central Europe, on the Rhine, the Vistula, the Amur, or the Yangtse, one determining issue is at stake. The internal policies of Western civilisation are, one and all, dominated and determined by the same haunting concern. Between those two forces, between human purpose for rational and just organisation and human purpose for predatory anarchy, a clash is inevitable. As a German publicist lately remarked : " The world is too small to contain both the Union of Soviet Republics and the states of the capitalistic world." Whatever the form and immediate outcome of that ineluctable clash, the ultimate outcome is in no doubt. A humanity which has visioned and tasted the freedom from the incubus of traditional predatory barbarism and from the pretences and hypocrisies by which it is constrained to veil its naked horror, can never be



brought back under that yoke. It can be subjected only by being exterminated.

The second European civilisation which arose out of the barbarism of the Middle Ages has no claim, in a historical perspective, to any other denomination. Civilisation, in the best sense and acceptance of the term, far from drawing to its close is only now becoming possible. The effort of human intelligence to achieve social organisation is for the first time about to take effect. We are witnessing the agony of a dying world, but its death-throes are likewise the birth-pangs of a new world. It were puerile to look to that new phase of the development of humanity which is coming into being as a millennium. But it may well seem one by comparison with the record of chaos, anarchy, and untold suffering and injustice of traditional civilisation.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

WHILE THE DESTINIES of mankind are trembling in the balance it is the lot of the present generation to live under the strangest conditions which have ever been imposed upon human life.

The discrepancy between the thought and values of modern intelligence and those upon which the structure of civilisation is founded is growing ever more immeasurable. The two are irreconcilable. They appertain to different worlds. Between them there is no common ground. Yet for that very reason intelligence and sanity appear futile. The ancient idealistic tradition that an unorganised social and cultural structure can be directly influenced by intelligence and directed purpose is seen to be a delusion. The childish simplicity which could believe that the opinion which is disproved is abolished, that the fact which is demonstrated is established, that the injustice or the folly which is made patent is annihilated—that

simplicity is possible no longer. At the very time when the disillusion is most profound the contrast between intelligent thought and the structure of traditional civilisation at bay is most strident.

Because of that disillusion the sense of impotence is more overwhelming than at any period of the world. Thought, intelligence, intellectual honesty, rational purpose appear vain and futile. They beat their wings in vain against a massive and invulnerable wall on which no dint or impression can be made. The obstacle is not of the same order as the impinging thought. Hence its invulnerability. It is not related to thought or intelligence, it is a structure of vested and vital interests stiffened by the sense of impending doom.

The inevitability and the imminence of the doom which hangs over that structure are clearer to sane intelligence than to the powers which are struggling for reprieve. Yet intelligent men and women of the present generation are faced with a fate which appears even more appalling. The brief span of their lives is laid between two worlds, with no firm footing or foundation in either. In a world which is



speeding towards dissolution they are strangers. The world to which they belong is as yet unborn. And they are powerless to influence the great change or to take effective part in it. They are carried along and buffeted in the troubled stream, yet are not part of it. Never did life appear more purposeless. So true is it that human beings are integral parts of the social whole. They cannot live except in relation to it. They cannot live individual lives. They must be at one with the aims, the strivings, the purposes of humanity.

All other issues, all other interests, all other aims are dwarfed into insignificance beside those which hang in the balance in the present crisis of human history. That is why great art or inspired science are not possible to-day. To take refuge in detached creation or contemplation, to divert the mind from the conflict in which human destinies are being decided is not consistent with the qualities which creative art or creative thought demand. The mind which does not view all interest as subordinate to the vital issues that are at stake cannot be creative. It can scarcely be intelligent, it can scarcely be effectively hedonistic even. To

apply oneself at such a time to amenities which have no direct bearing upon the central issue is to trifle. It is not frivolous only, it is futile. What is now changing is not the external structure of the human world merely, but its fundamental values, the values upon which life, art, science rest. All thought, all aims, all creation, all the activities of the mind and the significances of life are under the necessity of choosing between two sets of values, the transient values of a world which is passing and those of the new. By no withdrawal into detached spheres can the choice be evaded. In the controversial subterfuges and sophistries of current intellectual confusion, insistence is often laid on detachment, on that non-committal impartiality of the mind which has been the cultivated attitude of academic tradition in particular, and which supposes itself, or professes to be, objective. Thought which departs from that attitude is, according to current criticism, tainted with bias and propaganda. But that professed objective detachment is the merest delusion. No thought exists except on the premise of definite values. Thought can only differ from thought according to the values on

which it builds. At a time when the gulf which divides the values of a dying and those of a rising world is abysmal and unbridgeable, no product of the mind, no art, no judgment, no science can contrive not to take sides. No behaviour even can. In that impossibility lies the very essence of a situation which is without parallel in the past.

The transformation through which the human world is passing is determined by the operation of factors which, in their magnitude and complexity, lie beyond the reach of individual thought or action. In much the same manner as the individual is caught up in the machinery of the social structure and becomes an impersonal agent of its action, so the laws of social change operate impersonally and independently of any individual. The aggregate psychological factors which play their part in the process are governed by laws which are not those of individual psychology.

Powerless as it is amid the titanic play of world forces, individual thought is not wholly irrelevant. Those forces are beyond individual control. No man can arrest the course of their operation ; no man, perhaps, can speed it.

But their ultimate effect depends not upon those fatal forces which are inevitably bringing traditional civilisation to ruin, but upon the mind, upon the thought of the race. The collapse of the social structure of a savage and barbaric humanity results in intensified savagery and barbarism. The effect of the disintegration is chaos. The mind of the new humanity that shall build upon the ruins of traditional civilisation can accomplish the task only if it has already come into being. It must be born to-day, not to-morrow, if it is to build to-morrow. To bring it into being is the task of the present generation. That task it can fulfil even though the mountainous masses of the world which is crumbling to its doom cannot be moved by any act or thought of the individual.

Two courses are open to him. In harmony with the principles of traditional civilisation he may snatch at opportunities of profit which a world that is passing still offers to predatory individualism. He may live in the old world. He may live in accordance with its values. Should he elect to do so it is irrelevant to bandy ethical epithets, to speak of duty, of loyalty to

ideals which thousands of years of debased currency have proved futile formulas. It is idle to call the opportunist a coward and a traitor. With himself alone lies the appraisal of values. If his life can find its satisfaction in opportunism, none can cast ethical invectives at him. He lives in the world to which he belongs.

To others such a choice will be intolerable. Why some people should be interested in justice and in the future of the human race is as difficult to say as it is to explain why some people are interested in cricket or golf, in sentimental or mystery novels, in tap-dancing or jazz music. People who are deeply moved by the spectacle of crime and injustice are usually supposed to be virtuous and noble. I should say that they are intelligent. A great many people are entirely undisturbed by the fact that the affairs of the world in which they live are conducted on criminal principles, that every provision is now being made to murder some millions of people, that almost as many are being slowly murdered in order that their despoilers should be able to enjoy their game of golf with no anxiety except how to manage to spend their unwieldy bank accounts and

their boring leisure. I do not think that the people who are entirely undisturbed by those facts are morally depraved or criminally inhuman. I think they are merely stupid. They have all their lives been accustomed to hear that such a state of things is quite normal and inevitable, that it is the fruit of the accumulated wisdom and experience of mankind, and that those who devote their talents and energy to safeguarding and protecting that state of affairs from any danger of its being amended or altered are wise and good people who are deeply concerned with human welfare. They are accustomed to regard traditional civilisation as a glorious and excellent thing to which all men of goodwill should be loyal and devoted. It has never occurred to them that traditional civilisation is a criminal enterprise. They cannot help thinking that anyone who holds that view must be singularly ignorant or depraved, since that enterprise is backed by the whole authority of tradition. If the people who are more deeply interested in golf, or in exciting novels, or in jazz than in such remote subjects as justice and the future of mankind could think for themselves

instead of accepting without a doubt the authority of tradition, I imagine that they would be just as virtuous and noble-minded as those who find the spectacle of crime intolerable.

But to be virtuously and nobly indignant is not enough. People who have been virtuous and noble have promoted and perpetuated those criminal enterprises which are to-day threatening to bring down upon themselves and upon the world a terrible nemesis. People who are virtuous and noble and who are indignant are to-day helping to promote those same enterprises by spreading the delusion that traditional civilisation can be amended by virtuous and noble sentiments and by tinkering adjustments. The hour is passed for such insufficiently intelligent virtue and nobility. Traditional civilisation cannot be saved, and it is well that it cannot be saved. What is of importance is not to save traditional civilisation, but to save the human race from ever building up another, or one that shall be crippled and diseased at its very vitals by traditional values. The disaster from which it is of moment to safeguard mankind is not the downfall of traditional civilisation, but its

resurrection in any form. To avoid that peril it is not sufficient to be virtuous and noble. It is necessary to be intellectually honest. It is necessary to see beyond the crimes of the existing anarchy to their deeper and essential causes in its traditional mentality, values and standards of thought. To do so it is necessary that the minds of men should be more honest than their lives can be. It is necessary to live a more intense individual life than predatory individualism has been able to produce, a fuller and richer life. From such individualism alone, transcending the spurious individualism of a base and mendacious tradition, can the moral courage be derived which is the measure of self-fulfilment. Is it not strange that in this day and age of the world life and thought should actually be fearful of self-expression? Traditional civilisation has had this result : that a man is afraid to speak, afraid to think. The shadowy dead hands of inquisitors and censors are upon his mind, upon his thought, upon his word. Yet are they more than shadows, the shadows of a world which is for ever passing away ? Its evil and shame we must still endure. Of the shadowy hand of tradition



which it would lay upon our very souls we need not be fearful.

The present times call for two virtues above all others : moral courage and intellectual honesty. The latter is only a form of moral courage. It entails what we are accustomed to regard as great sacrifices. So does every virtue, and also every vice. Intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice demand sacrifices of a different kind, but no less disagreeable to many. Moral courage is the condition of the only true kind of freedom. It is the fulfilment of that individualism of which the anarchy of predatory civilisation fraudulently and sacrilegiously sets up the counterfeit as its emblem. Traditional economic individualism is the bondage, degradation, and surrender of the individual mind. True individualism is the attainment of that freedom which satisfies. Whether he wills it or no, the life of social man is the reflection of social aims. He cannot dissociate himself from humanity's need for justice and reason without surrendering some of his own most vital needs. These are not compensated by any blood-price which opportunism can offer.





